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THE SOCIAL ORGANISATION OF NEWS  
INTERVIEW INTERACTION

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## SUMMARY

This thesis describes and analyses aspects of the social organisation of British news interview interaction. After a review of the sociological literature on the British news interview in Chapter 1, and a discussion of the evolution of news interviewing in Britain in Chapter 2, Chapter 3 argues that conversation analysis provides the appropriate analytical framework for the study of all forms of naturally occurring interaction. Using the techniques of conversation analysis, the next three chapters then focus on three central domains of news interview conduct: the organisation of turn-taking, the organisation of topic, and the organisation of disagreement.

Chapter 4 proposes (i) that the news interview turn-taking system operates through a simple form of turn-type pre-allocation, and (ii) that this accounts for a range of systematic differences between news interviews and mundane conversation. Chapter 5 first explicates some of the types of work that interviewers accomplish through the production of questions which maintain or pursue the topical focus of preceding turns and sequences. It then examines some of the procedures which interviewees recurrently use in order to shift the focus of their talk away from the topical agendas which interviewers' questions establish for their turns. Chapter 6, describes how the patterning of disagreements in news interviews differs from that of disagreements in ordinary talk. In so doing, it argues that the fact that the organisation of disagreements in news interviews differs from that in conversation is largely a product of considerations which arise due to the turn-type pre-allocated character of news interview interaction.

Finally, Chapter 7 explores the relationship of some of the features described in Chapters 4-6 to the background legal, institutional and other normative constraints on news interviewer/ee conduct.

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## PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Since the mid-1950s the news interview has represented an important and at times controversial aspect of news and current affairs broadcasting in the United Kingdom. The changing character of the British news interview since this time has been widely commented upon by professional broadcasters, informed commentators and the authors of manuals for television and radio journalists. However, despite the fact that British broadcast journalism has been the subject of a considerable body of sociological research, the news interview has been subjected to little in the way of detailed sociological analysis. Accordingly, while a range of insightful observations have been made about the development of the news interview into a major broadcasting convention, little systematic analytical attention has been given to the basic features of conduct within the news interview per se.

The present dissertation is the product of an attempt, over the past seven years, to learn something about this neglected topic by means of applying the approach and findings of conversation analysis to a corpus of recordings of television and radio news interviews. It should perhaps be stressed, however, that this study does not propose an explanatory theory as such for the organisational features of British news interview interaction. Rather it seeks to describe a range of these features and to relate them to their institutional background. What follows therefore is essentially an essay in description.

I owe a special debt of gratitude to my dissertation supervisor John Heritage who introduced me to conversation analysis and who, as a colleague and friend, has given his time and assistance unhesitatingly and been a constant source of insights and ideas. I should also like to thank Max Atkinson and Anita Pomerantz for their sympathetic encouragement and for their valuable observations on various aspects of this dissertation.

## Chapter One

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Preliminary Remarks

Every day a range of politicians and other public figures - experts, eye-witnesses, protagonists in disputes, participants in newsworthy events - are seen or heard speaking on Britain's numerous broadcast news and current affairs programmes. For the most part, however, these participants do not address themselves directly to the broadcast audience. Rather they communicate their experiences, information, opinions, beliefs and attitudes in the context of impromptu news interviews.<sup>1</sup> Thus their talk, while being produced primarily for the benefit of the broadcast audience, is issued not in the form of a speech, but rather as a series of responses to questions put to them by professional interviewers.

At the present time, four basic forms of news interview are used on British television and radio. First, there are set-piece interviews which (i) vary in length from a few minutes to half-an-hour or more, (ii) involve the use of interviewing styles which range from straightforward narrative elicitation to provocative cross-questioning, and (iii) are variously directed to extracting factual information, examining opinions and ideas, and exploring areas of personality and emotion (Magee, 1966; Pearce, 1973; Yorke 1978; Tyrrell, 1981). Second, there are spot interviews (Yorke, 1978: 111) which, having been hurriedly organised at the scene of newsworthy happenings - such as accidents, disasters, and robberies, are normally used as a means of eliciting eye-

witness accounts of "What happened... how...why...when... (and) where" (Tyrrell, 1981: 148). Third, there are doorstepper interviews (Yorke, 1978:111) in which subjects are briefly questioned, often amid a melee of journalists, as they emerge from such events as strike negotiations, disciplinary hearings, and tribunals. And finally, there are short vox pop interviews where interviewers, seeking the opinions of ordinary members of the public on a given topic, question people, usually at random, as they go about their everyday business (ibid.).

But while these various forms of unrehearsed interview now lie at the heart of news and current affairs broadcasting in the United Kingdom, the convention whereby first person statements are interactionally generated within such contexts has not always prevailed. Up until the mid-1950s the news interview was a comparatively rare event in broadcast journalism, which largely confined itself to reporting the statements of newsmakers secondhand. Moreover, in those interviews which did occur, the questions commonly constituted prearranged topic headings for carefully prepared speeches which interviewees often directly addressed to the broadcast audience. Thus the news interview, in its present form, did not begin to emerge as a major broadcasting convention until the second half of the 1950s. And, as will be seen in Chapter 2, it was not until the 1960s that it achieved anything like its current prominence as an instrument of journalistic inquiry.

One fairly obvious consequence of the rise of the news interview into a ubiquitous feature of broadcast journalism is that both television and radio have become more open to direct inputs from newsmakers. At the same time, however, the parallel emergence of

impromptu interviewing has radically altered the terms upon which actors can expect to be given access to media time in news interview settings. For, whereas in the days of stage-managed interviewing subjects were frequently permitted to use their news interview appearances to straightforwardly articulate prepared statements, since the institutionalisation of the impromptu interview they have overwhelmingly been interviewed on the proviso that they respond to questions without notice or rehearsal. And, as such, with their talk having to be generated in situ, their behaviour, along with that of news interviewers, has necessarily been subject to constraints which are at once interactional, institutional and (given that, as broadcast journalists, interviewers are formally obliged to remain impartial) legal.

The purpose of the present thesis is to explicate some of these constraints by means of an examination of the structural properties of news interview interaction.

## 1.2 Sociological Analyses of News Interview Conduct

Over the past fifteen years, a substantial body of sociological research has been directed to investigating the production and content of broadcast news and current affairs programmes in Britain.<sup>2</sup> However, despite the fact that it is a central feature of many of these programmes, the news interview has attracted relatively little in the way of detailed analytical attention. Accordingly, with one or two notable exceptions, social scientists have somewhat neglected what is undoubtedly a major site for the in situ creation of broadcast media output.

Insofar as the news interview has featured in sociological studies,

it has largely been treated as a subsidiary topic in the context of analyses that are primarily concerned with explicating ideological, interpretative and conceptual frameworks which purportedly underpin various types of broadcast journalism. These analyses - which presuppose that news is a manufactured product rather than, as media people are apt to claim, "a merely factual report of events in the world" (Schlesinger et al., 1983:36) - have been focussed for the most part on televised programmes. Nonetheless, one of the basic reference points within this body of work is an article by Stuart Hall (1973) which is centred on the ideological orientations of radio journalism.

In this article, A World at One With Itself, Hall argues that radio news magazine programmes are slanted in favour of those viewpoints which lend support to the status quo. In his view, however, this bias is not normally the result of deliberate manipulation. Rather it is primarily an unwitting bias which results from the routine practices of news production:

Within its limits, radio shows little direct evidence of intentional bias. It treats the spokesmen of the two major political parties with scrupulous fairness ... But the troublesome question is the matter of unwitting bias: the institutional slanting, built in is not by the devious inclination of editors to the political right or left, but by the steady and unexamined play of attitudes which, via the mediating structure of professionally defined news values, inclines all the media towards the status quo (ibid. 87-88).

As far as the conduct of news interviewers is concerned, Hall asserts that this unwitting bias means that subjects are questioned from within inferential frameworks which reflect the perspectives of middle-class consensus politics. That this is so, he says, is to be seen most clearly in the arguments that are recurrently advanced against groups

whose actions, views or intentions threaten or call into question those perspectives. So, for example, according to Hall:

Unofficial strikers are always confronted with the national interest, squatters with the rights of private property, civil rights militants in Ulster with the need for Protestant and Catholic to work together, (and) Stop the Seventy Tourers with the way minority actions limit the right of the majority to enjoy themselves as they wish (ibid. 89).

In sum, then, Hall proposes that the assumptions which underlie the questions asked in radio news magazine interviews "are coincident with the official ideologies of the status quo" (ibid.). This bias, though, is rarely wilful or intentional. Instead it is an unwitting bias which stems from "the institutionalised ethos of the news media as a whole" (ibid.).

As noted, since Hall's article on radio journalism, sociological commentaries on the news interview have tended to be embedded in analyses of televised news and current affairs programmes. This is the case, for example, in Brunsdon and Morley's (1978) consideration of the conceptual and ideological frameworks used on the BBC's current affairs magazine programme Nationwide. It is also the case, for example, in the Glasgow Media Group's (1976, 1980) two large-scale studies of industrial and economic news reporting, as well as in Schlesinger et al's (1983) examination of the ways in which terrorism is handled in a range of both factual and fictional television programmes.

Turning first to the Nationwide study, Brunsdon and Morley argue, in an interesting discussion of interviewing, that it is the extra-programme status of Nationwide interviewees which largely determines what types of questions they will be asked by the programme's interviewers. Thus, drawing on the work of Cardiff (1974), they report that while

Participants of 'low' status... tend (a) to be questioned only about their 'feelings' and responses to issues whose terms have already been defined and (b)... tend also to be quickly cut short if they move 'off the point'..., participants of 'higher' status... tend to be (a) questioned about their 'ideas' rather than their 'feelings' and (b) will be allowed much more leeway to define issues in their own terms (Brunsdon and Morley, 1978: 65).

Brunsdon and Morley go on to stress, however, that, although the Nationwide team routinely seek to interview those who are deemed to be of 'low' status within 'personal experience' frames, and those who are deemed to be of 'higher' status within 'ideas and opinions' frames, their control over the topical focus of news interview talk "is not simply given" (ibid. 69). Rather

it has to be maintained, at times through an ongoing struggle, by specific discursive strategies, on the studio floor (ibid.).

This is so, they say, because subjects may try to 'break the frame' that Nationwide has set up for them.

In order to illustrate this observation, Brunsdon and Morley briefly consider an interview with Patrick Mehan who, despite his claims that he was framed by British Intelligence, served seven years of a life sentence for murder. In this interview, which was conducted shortly after his release from jail, Mehan's status is apparently "constructed as being low... because of his background" (ibid. 66) and, as a result, he is questioned within a 'personal experience' frame. According to Brunsdon and Morley, however, Mehan repeatedly attempts to break this frame by talking "about the political issues behind (his) case rather than about his feelings while in prison" (ibid. 69):



Mehan: ... I think it's wrong that, er, when things happen in places like America that people over here should become all sanctimonious and criticise, little do they know that the same things are happening here and the whole system is geared to prevent these things coming to the surface... (ibid.)

However, the interviewer resists these attempts to redirect the focus of the discussion by continuing to question Mehan about his feelings and experiences (as opposed to his ideas, opinions, and intentions):

You sound quite bitter.....  
What was your daily routine in prison? (ibid. 70)

Thus, Brunsdon and Morley propose, this interview develops into "a struggle... over which 'frame' is operating or dominant" (ibid. 70) and thus "over the very terms of the discourse" (ibid.).

It is in view of cases such as this, then, that Brunsdon and Morley conclude their brief consideration of the use of topical frames in Nationwide interviews by suggesting that:

interviewing and responding, within the dominant discursive strategies of this kind of programme, entail the work (for the presenters) of securing the dominant frame (for it cannot be taken for granted as unproblematically given), and sometimes also (for the respondents) of struggling against or countering the dominant frame (though these counter-positions are by no means always taken up) (ibid.).

The Glasgow Media Group's observations about the ideological underpinnings of interviewer conduct are located in their two major content analytic studies of televised economic and industrial news output during the first few months of 1975.<sup>3</sup> In the first of these studies, Bad News (1976), the Media Group's basic contention is that, in reporting

industrial disputes, newswriters use inferential frameworks that are skewed against the interests of the trade union and Labour movement. Thus, very briefly, it is proposed that television journalists (1) focus on the effects and disruptive consequences of strikes, while neglecting their underlying causes, (2) assume that strikes are reprehensible, and (3) therefore typically present them to the public as sensational and unreasonable forms of behaviour. In the case of news interviewing, which they discuss at various points in their analysis, the Media Group propose that this anti-strike slant is observable in the questions that are asked in interviews which deal with industrial disputes. Thus, for example, according to them, interviewers rarely concern themselves with the motives of workers who take industrial action. Rather they focus almost exclusively on the effects of such action (e.g. *ibid.* 223-224).

Moreover, the Media Group argue that, in the context of dispute-related coverage, interviewers (in line with television journalists as a whole) also recurrently presume that it is the workforce who are chiefly to blame for Britain's economic and industrial difficulties. This, they suggest, was graphically illustrated in the coverage given to a dispute at the British Leyland Motor Company's Cowley plant in January 1975. For here - in spite of the fact that there were alternative explanations to hand which pointed to "a history of bad management and the lack of effective investment" (*ibid.* 260) - interviewers persistently pursued the theme that Leyland's widely publicised economic problems had been caused by the 'irresponsible' actions of a 'strike-prone' labour force (*ibid.* 256-268).

In the second of their studies, More Bad News (1980), the Glasgow Media Group are once again concerned with demonstrating that televised

economic and industrial news stories are skewed against the perspectives of the working class in general, and of organised labour in particular. Thus in this study, with their data having been collected at a time when the British economy was afflicted by a high rate of inflation, the Media Group argue that these stories involved the use of a framework of interpretation which (mirroring the views of the Treasury, as well as of big business and management) assumed that the problem of inflation was primarily the result of 'excessive' wage rises, and that accordingly the solution to Britain's economic travails lay in the moderation of pay demands by workers. The adoption of this standpoint, the Glasgow group say, meant that (1) alternative perspectives (such as the view widely held within the Labour movement that the crisis was due largely to under-investment in industry, excessive profits, and a collapse in world trade) were rarely presented to the public, and that (2) attempts by workers to obtain more pay, particularly when they involved industrial action, were generally portrayed as threats to the national economy, and therefore, if only by implication, as irresponsible and irrational (ibid. passim).

In the course of discussing this proposition, the Media Group claim that "the themes of wage inflation and the need for pay restraint and the lowering of living standards" (ibid. 108) pervaded a range of aspects of news interviewer conduct. So, for instance, it is said that interviewers were not only inclined to pursue lines of questioning which assumed that 'excessive' pay rises were to blame for inflation, but were also much more likely to challenge statements which contradicted this 'dominant view' than those which did not (ibid. 17-19). The Media Group exemplify

this by contrasting the actions of the news interviewers in two of the interviews in their data base. Thus, in the first of these examples, the interviewee, rejecting the 'dominant view' that inflation could only be brought under control via the moderation of wage claims, outlined a number of alternative measures for dealing with the economic crisis. Subsequently, however, the interviewer returned to the theme of 'wage inflation'; and, in so doing, the Media Group suggest, cast doubt upon the interviewee's analysis (ibid. 17-18).

Mikardo: I think we have got to have some really strong economic controls...

Interviewer: Such as?

Mikardo: Such as import controls and much stronger exchange controls than we have at the moment. I would like to see the planning agreement system pushed ahead very fast. I would want to see the National Enterprise Board set up quickly. I would want to see a rapid extension of the public sector and I would want to see, above all, a major redistribution of income and wealth, lopping of the top and adding to the bottom.

Interviewer: Ah, but here's the rub, isn't it, because it seems that the CBI and the government are almost agreed that it's the increase in wages at the present rate that is not tolerable.

Mikardo: Yes and of course this is subscribing to a hoary myth, that the only cause of inflation is increases in wages. This is nonsense.

In the second example, by contrast, the Media Group say that the statements of an interviewee whose viewpoints were coincident with the purported ideological perspectives of the news media remained unchallenged (ibid. 19).

Interviewee: Until you fetch the rate of inflation down you cannot expect business to improve. There is only one way to bring the rate of inflation down and that is to stop the very large wage increases that we are seeing at the current time.

Newcaster: Are we going to go on seeing large companies laying off men, shortening the working week?

Interviewee: Very largely... (continues)

Finally, the Glasgow Media Group claim that, in pursuing the 'wage inflation' theme, news interviewers (like other television journalists) also used language that was "often quite explicitly critical" of workers' pay claims (ibid. 70). Hence they contend that the question in the extract below, which involved the interviewer equating "'rational' and 'reasonable' behaviour quite explicitly with the acceptance of wage restraint", was by no means untypical (ibid.).

Interviewee: Our job as a trade union is to maintain the purchasing power of our members' salaries and that's all we're trying to do with the pay claim we've now formulated.

Newcaster: But as reasonable men and responsible citizens can you say that's all you're trying to do and all you're interested in when you hear warnings from the Chancellor to the effect that increases of this sort are going to wreck the national economy?

To sum up, then, the Glasgow Media Group argue that (a) the coverage given to economic and industrial stories by television news bulletins is slanted against working class and trade union interests, and that (b) this imbalance is observable in, amongst other things, the assumptions which underlie news interview questioning.

Schlesinger et al's remarks on news interview conduct, which are perhaps the most systematic to date, are located in their book Televising 'Terrorism' (1983). In this study, which is centrally concerned with explicating the ways in which Irish republican political violence is

handled on different types of television programmes, the authors begin by outlining "the various contending perspectives in Britain and similar societies on the question of 'terrorism'" (ibid. 2). In so doing, they suggest that there are basically four such perspectives and that these can be labelled 'official', 'alternative', 'populist' and 'oppositional' (ibid).

The official perspective, whose adherents include "government ministers, conservative politicians and top security personnel" (ibid.) "removes terrorism from the political arena by stressing its essential criminality" (ibid.). Moreover it sanctions the use of 'repressive' counter-terrorist measures provided that they are authorised by a democratically elected assembly (ibid. 2-16).

The alternative perspective, whose advocates include "civil libertarians, critical academics and journalists, and some politicians" (ibid. 16), also challenges the legitimacy of anti-state violence within liberal democracies. However, it differs from the official standpoint in that apart from emphasising the political (as opposed to the criminal) motivations of terrorist organisations, it also seeks to draw attention to the ways in which the use of "exceptional measures and emergency legislation" (ibid. 21) to combat terrorism can sometimes seriously threaten civil liberties and democratic rights (ibid. 16-24). Thus, according to Schlesinger et al,

the alternative perspective...questions the official strategy of repressing and exorcising terrorism, advocating instead strategies of political change and social engineering designed to defuse the violence and tackle its causes (ibid. 17).

As far as the populist perspective is concerned, this veers in precisely the opposite direction. Thus, in calling for such things as

the assassination of 'known' terrorists, populist spokesmen - who, in the context of the UK, include loyalist leaders and mainland right-wingers - demand that the state put the maintenance of law and order above strict legality, in order to prosecute a full-blooded war against terrorist groups (ibid. 24-27).

Finally, the oppositional perspective, which is advocated by members of 'terrorist' organisations, "or by those who either directly speak for them or share their objectives" (ibid. 27), justifies the use of political violence on the grounds that it is the only means through which an oppressed people can hope to liberate themselves from either state repression or colonial rule. Proponents of the oppositional viewpoint, then, see 'so-called terrorists' as 'freedom fighters' with defined and legitimate political aims (ibid. 27-31).

Having introduced these four perspectives on political violence, Schlesinger et al, in looking at the ways in which such viewpoints are presented on television, basically attempt to answer two questions. These are (i) how 'open' or 'closed' are different forms of programming to official, alternative, populist, and oppositional definitions? And (ii) to what extent do these different forms of programming tend to be organised in a 'tight' manner - so as to provide "a single preferred interpretation" of the events and views with which they deal, or conversely in a 'loose' manner - so as to "(leave) the viewer with a choice of interpretations"? (ibid 32)

In essence, Schlesinger et al's guiding thesis is that although

the official line on political violence (sets) the terms of reference in most types of television programme,...it does not usually hold exclusive sway. The more we move away from the most popular forms of television, the more complex the interplay of views becomes (ibid. 110).

Thus, in their consideration of actuality television, they suggest that, "with their different production constraints, and their different public identities", the various forms of programme which fall under the heading of televised journalism handle the issue of terrorism in distinctive ways (ibid. 35). In endeavouring to demonstrate "how and why they do so" (ibid. 34), they first focus on the news bulletin, and then turn to consider the news magazine and the current affairs programme.

With respect to the first of these programme forms, the news bulletin, Schlesinger et al begin by asserting that, while television broadcasting organisations are formally obliged to present accurate and impartial news reports, this obligation

is defined in practice in terms of positions taken in relation to the British political system and its underlying social and economic order (ibid. 35).

Accordingly, they argue that

Since terrorism, particularly that which makes its presence felt on the domestic scene, is seen as threatening the social order, this is one field of coverage where broadcast journalism cannot remain impartial (ibid.).

Against this background, Schlesinger et al have the following to say about the manner in which television news bulletins handle such controversial topics as terrorism:

The news output of organisations such as the BBC and ITN attracts keen attention and scrutiny from politicians and is therefore one of the points at which the authority and credibility of the broadcasting organisations is most exposed. Consequently, adherence to the practices and techniques which define 'impartiality' is as much a matter of institutional survival as one of external pressure. The more the broadcasters sustain an image of political responsibility the



more they strengthen their claims to authority and so forestall attempts to impose more stringent controls on their operations. But these constraints result in a form of news which presents itself as a merely factual report of events in the world. News bulletins tend to be rendered in a style that conceals the processes of selection and decision which lie behind the reporting, and which allows little room for comment or argumentation. The opinions which are presented are almost always confined to the holders of power in major institutions: government ministers and politicians from the major parties; senior members of the police force and the judiciary; trade union leaders and the heads of employers' organisations; and those who speak for 'accredited' pressure and interest groups such as churches and professional organisations. As a result, news is one of the more 'closed' forms of presentation, and operates predominantly within the terms of the official perspective (ibid. 36).

Having argued that televised news bulletins largely reproduce the official line on terrorism, Schlesinger et al go on to suggest that other forms of television journalism are not always so closed-off to non-official perspectives. Hence they propose that, although news magazine and current affairs programmes operate within similar parameters to television news, and generally draw on a cast of spokesmen representing 'legitimate' (ie. non-oppositional) viewpoints, "the rubric of balance and the easing of time constraints ensures that a wider spread of opinions is presented" (ibid. 40). At the same time, however, they stress that the inferential frames which are used on such programmes do not, as a rule, involve marked departures from official thinking (ibid. 40-41).

In illustrating and elaborating upon these proposals, Schlesinger et al make a number of insightful points about news interviewing. In particular, they suggest that, while interviews located in news bulletins usually involve official lines of questioning, interviews on the somewhat

more flexible news magazines and current affairs programmes exhibit "important variations of emphasis" (ibid. 40). So, for example, in these types of programme, interviewers may

present themselves as populist spokesmen and women, articulating what they take to be the prevailing fears and preoccupations of 'ordinary viewers', basing their questions on some supposed commonsense consensus on the issue (which places the discussion firmly within the parameters of the official perspective). Or, they may choose the role of devil's advocate, quizzing their Establishment witnesses from a perspective which incorporates alternative or even oppositional elements. Though, here again, there are significant variations in the way this role is performed. Presenters may be deferential and apologetic, prefacing their remarks with phrases like 'some people would argue...'. Or they may be more direct and obtrusive as in 'but surely you do not mean to tell me that...'. The aggressive style is most apparent when the witness is putting an alternative or oppositional view....(ibid.)

Some of Schlesinger et al's most illuminating observations about news interviewer conduct are to be found in a discussion of the ways in which factual television handles oppositional views. For, in this part of their analysis, they suggest that the presentation of oppositional perspectives on domestic terrorism often differs significantly from the presentation of similar perspectives on foreign terrorism, and that this is particularly apparent on those occasions in which oppositional spokesmen are given access to air time in interview settings.

Thus, with respect to domestic terrorism, they contend that, apart from being very rare occurrences, interviews with advocates of oppositional definitions are normally embedded in programmes that are organised so as to deny the legitimacy of the views expressed within them (ibid. 50-61). In the context of the interviews themselves, the

implementation of such tightly structured frameworks of interpretation is said to result in the use of aggressive, adversarial styles of questioning, with the interviewers persistently countering and challenging the subjects' oppositional statements (ibid. 50-56). One of a number of examples used to illustrate this engaged style of interviewing is the following extract, which is drawn from a Panorama (BBC 1, 22 November 1982) interview with the Vice-President of Sinn Fein. The extract begins with the interviewer turning to the issue of Sinn Fein's support for what it calls the 'armed struggle'.

Fred Emery: At what point does what you call the armed struggle, this campaign essentially of murder, at what point does that cease?

Gerry Adams: Sinn Fein doesn't advocate a campaign of murder. Sinn Fein supports politically and defends the right of people, as legitimate action, to resist British rule.

Fred Emery: But it also has a resolution that you read out at your party conference only last week, that all its candidates must be unambivalent in support of the armed struggle. Now that is a campaign of murder, surely?

Gerry Adams: No. No, let me just.....

Fred Emery: And it was passed without anybody....

Gerry Adams: Of course it was passed and that's always been the Sinn Fein position and it's nothing new. Now the British Government are unambivalent in their support of what happens in this country. There's no-one goes along and awards IRA men medals when they kill civilians, yet the British Government, when British troops wantonly and deliberately and consciously opened fire and killed civilians in Derry, the British Government awarded the person in charge medals.

Fred Emery: It brought them to trial.

Gerry Adams: Let me finish. No it didn't bring the people in Bloody Sunday to trial. It's OK if the British Government go and murder people in the Argentine and to be applauded for their actions....

Fred Emery: That is another argument.

Gerry Adams: It isn't another argument. If it's legitimate for the British Government to resist what they see as oppression by the Argentine, certainly, very very certainly its legitimate for Irish people in their own country. (ibid. 56).

In turning to consider factual television's treatment of foreign terrorism, Schlesinger et al. suggest that:

The greatest problems for actuality coverage arise when the 'terrorism' with which it deals is at home, proximate, within the boundaries of the British state. In other contexts, where the imperatives of national security recede (and with them threats of censorship or other state intervention) the possibilities of openness expand (ibid. 57).

Moreover, they add that, due to geographical distance (as well as to ideological criteria), "other states's problems with terrorism may (also) attract an altogether more critical gaze" (ibid.). Thus, very briefly, according to this analysis, in the context of foreign political violence, particularly that which occurs within non-democratic states, not only does television become more 'open' to oppositional accounts, but there is also more ideological space for accepting the legitimacy of such accounts (ibid. 56-61). As a result, Schlesinger et al argue, whereas interviewers generally vigorously challenge oppositional viewpoints on domestic political violence, they quite often permit oppositional viewpoints on similar violence abroad to prevail (ibid.).

As we have seen, sociological commentaries on the news interview have to date largely been embedded in analyses which are primarily concerned not with the basic features of news interview conduct per se, but rather with ideological, interpretative and conceptual frameworks which purportedly inform the conduct of broadcast journalists in a variety of contexts. Accordingly, while a range of insightful observations have been made about the ways in which such inferential frames appear to influence the lines of questioning pursued by news interviewers, the social structural properties of news interview interaction have remained largely unexamined.

In reporting some observations from a study of this neglected topic, this thesis will use the methods of conversation analysis in order to specify a number of the ways through which news interview contexts are recursively created and maintained within the talk of the participants. In so doing, it will describe and analyse some of the basic organisational features of news interview interaction, and explicate their relationship to the background institutional and legal constraints on broadcast journalism in Britain.

### 1.3 The Data Base

The data base for the present project consists of a corpus of largely audio recordings of some 455 interviews which were broadcast by the major British television and radio networks between 1978 and 1983. The subjects in these interviews - which include two-party, multi-interviewer and multi-interviewee interactions<sup>4</sup> - range from public figures who have been interviewed on many occasions to people who may well be taking part in a news interview for the first (and possibly only) time. The news interviewers too have varying degrees of experience.

As Table 1 shows, the data base includes 182 television interviews, of which 87 were broadcast live, and 95 pre-recorded.

Table 1: Television Interviews

	Number	Total Time	Average Time
Live	87	7.4 hrs	5.1 mins
Pre-Recorded	95	7.7 hrs	4.9 mins
Total	182	15.1 hrs	5.0 mins

Because, due to time constraints, television news bulletins usually transmit only brief extracts (often only single statements) from pre-recorded interviews, the majority of the televised interviews were drawn from news magazines and current affairs programmes.<sup>5</sup> These television interviews range from around 30 seconds to 3 minutes in length in the case of those involving spot, doorstepper, and vox pop interviewing, and from around 2 minutes to 25 minutes in length in the case of those involving set-piece interviewing. It may be noted that, although many

of the taped interviews have been edited, the mean length of the pre-recorded cases (4.9 mins) is in fact only slightly less than that of those cases which were transmitted live.

As for the remaining 273 radio interviews in the data base, these were drawn for the most part from BBC Radio 4's daily news magazines.<sup>6</sup> Due largely to the fact that such magazines customarily transmit a larger number of interviews per programme than their televised counterparts, these interviews, as Table 2 shows, differ from those which were gathered from television in that (a) a much greater proportion of them are pre-recorded, and in that (b) they are, on average, of much shorter duration (in point of fact, even the set-piece radio interviews rarely last longer than  $3\frac{1}{2}$  minutes). Like the television interviews, however, the live and pre-recorded cases have a similar mean length.

Table 2: Radio Interviews

	Number	Total Time	Average Time
Live	41	1.9 hrs	2.8 mins
Pre-Recorded	232	10.3 hrs	2.7 mins
Total	273	12.2 hrs	2.7 mins

As far as the editing of pre-recorded television and radio interviews is concerned, this frequently involves the removal of the opening and closing sections of an interchange. Hence many of the pre-recorded interviews in the data base begin and end with an interviewee's utterance - the linkman having introduced the interview by paraphrasing the question to which the interviewee is initially heard

or seen responding. On occasion, of course, editing also occurs in the context of the main body of an interview. However, in such cases, it is normally possible to detect from either audible or, in the case of televised interviews, visual evidence that cutting has taken place. And, accordingly, it can be confidently asserted that most, if not all, of those sections of the data base interviews which have been altered in this way have been excluded from the analysis.<sup>7</sup>

It only remains to be added here that the interviews in the data base vary considerably as regards to their content and style. Thus they not only focus on an array of industrial, political, social and moral issues, but also exhibit interviewing styles which range from relatively straightforward narrative elicitation to hostile, adversarial questioning. All in all, then, the data on which the findings of this dissertation are based constitute a fairly representative sample of news interview output in the United Kingdom.

#### 1.4 Plan of the Thesis

Chapter 2 of this thesis provides a brief historical sketch of the development of news interviewing in Britain. It describes how and why the news interview evolved into both a significant branch of investigative journalism and a central medium through which politicians communicate with the electorate. The chapter pays particular attention to the ways in which the role of the news interview has been shaped by changing interpretations of the concept of impartiality in news and current affairs broadcasting.

As a prelude to the analytic chapters of the thesis, Chapter 3 examines a number of alternative approaches to the study of speech as



social action - dealing in particular with speech act theory, discourse analysis and conversation analysis. The chapter argues that conversation analysis provides the appropriate analytical framework for the investigation of the social organisation of all forms of naturally occurring interaction. And, in a concluding section, it details some of the central features of studies that have used conversation analytic research techniques to analyse conduct in institutional settings.

The first of the thesis's three conversation analytic chapters, Chapter 4, focusses on the organisation of turn-taking in news interviews. It proposes that the British news interview turn-taking system, by contrast with the corresponding system for mundane conversation, operates through a simple form of turn-type pre-allocation. And it shows that this accounts for a substantial number of systematic differences between news interview and conversational interaction.

Chapter 5 considers some aspects of the organisation of topic in news interview contexts. The chapter begins by examining some sequences in which interviewers maintain or pursue topical lines through the production of supplementary questions. In so doing, it differentiates this class of questions from a number of other basic question-types, and then describes and analyses some of the activities that interviewers recurrently manage in and through their production. Following this, the chapter then turns to briefly consider some of the procedures through which interviewees may seek to shift the focus of their talk away from the topical agendas that interviewers' questions establish for their turns.

Chapter 6 investigates the organisation of disagreement in news interview interaction. It argues that the patterning of disagreement in this context differs markedly from that in conversation, and that this is due largely to the turn-type pre-allocated character of the news interview turn-taking system.

Finally, in the light of the preceding chapters, Chapter 7 discusses a range of the institutional, legal and other normative constraints on news interviewer and news interviewee conduct.

Footnotes to Chapter One

1. Throughout this dissertation the term 'news interview' refers not only to those interviews that are conducted on news bulletins, but also to those that are conducted on news magazines and current affairs programmes.
2. For useful reviews of this body of research, see Golding and Elliot (1979), Murdock (1980), Curran and Seaton (1981), and McQuail (1983).
3. Their studies focus on the first five months and the first four months of 1975 respectively.
4. While the data base also includes a number of interviews involving two or more interviewers and two or more interviewees, this type of interview is extremely rare and will not be considered in the present dissertation.
5. For example: BBC 1's Nationwide and Panorama; BBC 2's Newsnight; and ITV's Left, Right and Centre, TV Eye, and ATV Today.
6. Specifically, the weekday magazines The World at One and P.M., and the weekend magazine The World this Weekend.
7. For a useful discussion of *news interview editing*, see Pearce (1973).

## Chapter Two

### THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEWS INTERVIEW IN BRITAIN

#### 2.1 Introduction

Until 1955 the BBC - which, having been set up as a private company in 1922, has operated since 1926 as a licence-financed public corporation - was the sole broadcaster of radio and television programmes in the United Kingdom. In September of 1955, however, its monopoly of televised broadcasting was broken when commercial television commenced operations. And subsequently, it also lost its radio monopoly when the first of a network of independent radio stations began transmitting in the London area in 1973.

As far as factual programming is concerned, both the licence-financed and commercial broadcasting organisations have (in return for a guarantee that they will remain free from direct political interference in their handling of day-to-day matters) been formally obliged throughout their respective histories to (i) refrain from expressing opinions on matters of public controversy or public policy, and to (ii) maintain balance and impartiality in their news and current affairs coverage. In the case of the BBC, this obligation has been enforced through a series of charters and licences. Thus Clause 13(7) of the Corporation's current licence stipulates that:

The Corporation shall at all times refrain from sending any broadcast matter expressing the opinions of the Corporation on current affairs or on matters of public policy.....

As for the independent television and radio companies, their obligation to remain similarly impartial has been laid down in a series

of statutes. Hence the Independent Broadcasting Authority, which is charged with the task of supervising and administering the commercial sector,<sup>1</sup> is required by Section 4(lb) of the 1981 Broadcasting Act to ensure

that a sufficient amount of time in the programmes is given to news and news features and that all news given in the programmes (in whatever form) is presented with due accuracy and impartiality.

Moreover, Section 4(lf) further demands

that due impartiality is preserved on the part of the persons providing the programmes as respects matters of political or industrial controversy, or relating to current public policy.

In this chapter it will be seen that these formal obligations have played a crucial role in determining the ground rules which inform news interviewer conduct.

## 2.2 The Monopoly Years: 1922-1955

Throughout the years of the BBC's broadcasting monopoly, the news interview was of little importance either as a technique of journalistic inquiry or as a medium of political communication (Day, 1961, 1975; Dimbleby, 1975; Wedell, 1968; Whale, 1977, Yorke, 1978). Thus, during this period, interviewers were little more than 'respectful prompters' (Wedell, 1968: 205) who fed interviewees with 'soft-soap questions' (Day, 1961: 96) in interviews which were often 'manifestly prearranged and lacking in spontaneity' (ibid. 97). And, although politicians and other public figures did occasionally opt to express their 'carefully prepared views in news interview contexts (Wedell, 1968: 205), they normally read from a prepared statement when using radio or television

as a means of communicating with the electorate (Whale, 1977; Wyndham Goldie, 1977).

The relative insignificance of the news interview during the years of the monopoly was due in part to the fact that up until the 1950s 'broadcasting the spoken word' was traditionally regarded 'as a matter of reading the written word aloud' (Whale, 1977: 116).<sup>2</sup> More generally, however, it resulted from a restricted interpretation of the BBC's legal obligation to remain impartial in its coverage of news and current affairs. For, by defining impartiality as the provision of 'a balance of opinions and the reporting of available facts' (Day, 1975: 4), this interpretation militated against the development of the news interview into an instrument of investigative journalism.

This narrow interpretation of the concept of impartiality was established by the BBC's first Director General, John Reith. That Reith imposed such a strict code of impartiality upon his staff was due largely to his belief that the independence of the BBC from governmental interference could only be guaranteed if it steered clear of political controversy. Thus, in pursuing a policy whereby the BBC effectively 'preserved its independence by dint of testing it as seldom as possible' (Whale, 1977: 19), Reith enforced an approach to broadcasting which not only limited broadcast journalists to the cautious and passive reporting of available news stories, but which also fostered a posture of deference on the part of the Corporation to the wishes of any group which was deemed capable of undermining its somewhat precarious status as an independent body.<sup>3</sup> Correspondingly, with Reith additionally taking the view that all forms of broadcasting should primarily be directed to educating the populace (so as to 'raise the standards of the

nation')), both the BBC's news programmes and its broadcast interview contacts with public figures evolved into solemn rituals in which, as Whale has put it, the BBC chose 'what should be held up for respect and (held) it up' (ibid., 30).

Although Reith retired from the post of Director General in 1938, the atmosphere he had created at the BBC endured until the 1950s. Accordingly, following the Second World War, during which the BBC (while retaining its formal independence) operated essentially as a servant of the government, traditional Reithian attitudes continued to restrict the amount and content of broadcast news and current affairs output. One figure who did much to ensure that these attitudes remained intact was Tahu Hole, a New Zealander, who was made head of the BBC's News Division in 1948. The extent to which Hole, in enacting a cautious and paternalistic news policy, inhibited the development of broadcast journalism in Britain has been vividly portrayed by Jonathan Dimbleby:

Made News Editor in 1948, he imposed rules and restraints on the staff of the News Room which stifled talent and strangled enthusiasm. Under him the search for truth was destroyed by the demand for accuracy; the slogan 'if in doubt, leave out' was elevated to the status of a divine commandment. An obsession for political 'balance' made a mockery of proper journalism; investigation was impossible; 'scoops' were forbidden; the authority of the News Agencies was absolute; and no report by a BBC foreign correspondent could appear in a bulletin unless it had been first confirmed by at least two Agencies (Dimbleby, 1975: 270).

Within the context of this sterile atmosphere the role of news interviews (along with that of broadcast journalism as a whole) could not but be vestigial. Indeed throughout this period news interviews were either prearranged or else so benign and deferential that interviewees generally either treated the questions they were asked as

occasions to say more or less whatever they wished, or alternatively simply declined to answer them.

In sum, up until the mid-1950s, the straight talk was generally considered to be a far more appropriate and credible means of broadcasting the spoken word than the news interview. At the same time, due largely to the adoption of an extremely narrow interpretation of the concept of impartiality, those interviews which did take place were normally directed to eliciting nothing more than a few very simple facts. The relative insignificance of the news interview during the monopoly years was thus a reflection of the unimaginative, conservative and indeed solemn approach to broadcast journalism that the BBC's staff were obliged to pursue.

### 2.3 The Rise of the Television Interviewer: 1955-1959

If the news interview was of little significance prior to 1955, by the end of the 1950s it had evolved into both an important instrument of journalistic inquiry and a major medium of political communication. This development, which was initially confined to the rapidly expanding medium of television, was basically engendered by two factors: the breaking of the BBC's broadcasting monopoly, which undermined the existing deferential styles of interviewing, and the rise to cultural pre-eminence of television, which stimulated a greater willingness on the part of politicians to be questioned in news interviews.

Turning first to the advent of commercial television in 1955, the nationally networked Independent Television News service (ITN) did not opt to simply mirror the BBC's cautious and paternalistic news policy. Rather, with a view to attracting large audiences, it aimed from the



outset to be more investigative, lively, and entertaining than its rival. Thus, although like its BBC counterpart it was required by law to remain impartial, ITN broke with BBC precedents by adopting an interpretation of this obligation which provided for a degree of inquiry and investigation into news and current affairs stories. And, within the context of this interpretation, its personnel developed a distinctive and adventurous news-production formula which included the use of a 'searching, direct, and penetrating' style of impromptu interviewing (Day, 1961:95).

As for the BBC's news and current affairs service, ITN's re-definition of the ground rules for broadcast journalism in general, and for news interviewing in particular, could not but lead to extensive changes in both the form and content of its output. For, as Whale observes, whereas

a news organisation working on its own can swallow uninformative explanations of official or commercial blunders, and even the refusal to explain them at all, without any great discomfort....the moment there are rivals in the field it is afraid of appearing more gullible, less enterprising than them, lest its audience diminish (Whale, 1977:29)

Faced with the possibility (and, as the 1950s progressed, the reality) of the defection of a substantial section of its news audience, the BBC was thus compelled to abandon some of the more restrictive aspects of its Reithian and neo-Reithian broadcasting policies. And, accordingly, as it brought its journalistic conventions broadly into line with those of ITN, the unrehearsed investigative interview rapidly evolved into an established feature of its televised news and current affairs programmes.

The growth in the importance of the news interview in the second half of the 1950s did not, however, stem solely from the development of provocative interviewing styles. As was indicated above, another factor also served to enhance its status. This factor, briefly stated, was that politicians, whose broadcast appearances had previously been largely confined to scripted talks on the radio, became increasingly willing not only to appear on television, but also to be cross-questioned by this medium's new breed of 'audacious, sharp-tongued interviewers' (Day, 1961:95).

That politicians began to appear more frequently on television during this period is, of course, hardly surprising given that it was in the process of replacing radio as the pre-eminent broadcasting medium. As to why they came to more readily agree to take part in televised news interviews, this initially had a good deal to do with the fact that the scripted talk, which they had previously favoured when broadcasting, was not so well suited to television as it was to radio. The problems that politicians encountered when using this form of political communication on television are well discussed by Wyndham Goldie, who was involved in the production of BBC news and current affairs programmes at the time:

All broadcast talk, because it is received by individuals in their homes, takes on a personal character. Like Queen Victoria, individual listeners do not want to be addressed by another individual as if they were at a public meeting. So in sound radio immense pains were taken to write scripts not in a literary form suitable for publication, nor in that suitable for a speech in a public hall, but in the conversational style appropriate to informal conversation between individuals. And care was taken with the detail of presentation, for instance by preventing the rustling of the papers of a script, in order to preserve the pretence that this was personal and impromptu talk, not the reading aloud of a carefully prepared written document.

Vision (however) prevented deception of this kind. The speaker, being seen, was seen to be reading. No illusion of informal communication could be maintained. It was contradicted by what the viewer actually saw. Yet on important occasions it was hard for a politician to do without a script. A slip of the tongue in an impromptu talk by a Chancellor of the Exchequer or a Foreign Secretary might have disastrous consequences. And there were the practical difficulties of continuing to look directly at the appropriate lens of the appropriate television camera (that is, direct at the individual viewer) while still being able to take cues manually given by the floor manager, and also keep an eye on the timing. These problems combined to make the 'straight' unscripted talk the most difficult of all forms of television political communication. (Wyndham Goldie, 1977: 198-199).<sup>4</sup>

The attraction of the television interview in this context was that it offered politicians a means of avoiding the difficulties which they found in presenting straight-to-camera talks. Thus, as Wyndham Goldie goes on to note:

It was easier to talk informally to an interviewer than to the glassy eye of a television camera. And the practical problems were shouldered by whoever was conducting the interview. Politicians could ignore the cameras and leave matters of timing, of maintaining continuity and of taking cues, to the interviewer (ibid. 199).

With this said, however, the question remains open as to why politicians agreed not just to take part in television interviews, but also to be questioned by investigative interviewers. Why, in other words, did they become ready to be interviewed 'in ways which would have been unthinkable' (Day, 1961: 93) during the years of the BBC's broadcasting monopoly?

Two reasons are apparent. One was simply that, with their new found freedom, few broadcast journalists were willing to adopt a passive, let alone a deferential, posture in their interviews with politicians. As for the second reason, this was that British political

figures quickly discovered that they could enhance their political reputations by surviving an investigative interview. The fact that the successful negotiation of an investigative interview could have such a pay off was highlighted in 1958 when Harold Macmillan, the then Prime Minister, was aggressively cross-questioned by Robin Day on ITN's 'Tell the People'.<sup>5</sup> For, whereas a few days earlier Macmillan had given what was widely adjudged to have been a relatively uninspiring performance in a non-investigative interview (on BBC television's 'Press Conference'), in his interview with Day 'he made a tremendous personal impact' (ibid.) and, accordingly, as the following clippings from newspaper reports concerning the interview illustrate, greatly enhanced his reputation as a politician:

Tories will be delighted with the Prime Minister's television success. Certainly he is no longer just a House of Commons man. (The Yorkshire Post: ibid.)

The Prime Minister's replies were more direct and quicker to the point than in the BBC interview. (The Daily Telegraph: ibid)

(Mr Macmillan was) firm and confident in the face of vigorous questioning....certainly the most vigorous cross-examination a Prime Minister has been subjected to in public. (The Daily Express: ibid)

In sum, then, the willingness of politicians to appear in investigative interviews was largely a product of the discovery that such interviews represented a more effective medium of televised political communication than either non-investigative interviews or straight talks. An idea of the extent to which the role of television interviewers changed as a result of this development is provided by Wyndham Goldie, who recalls that:

By 1959 these men (there were still few women among them) had become part of the political scene. They appeared constantly on television; they were known to millions and often seemed to have more political significance than the majority of backbenchers. (Wyndham Goldie, 1977: 206)

Politicians did, of course continue to directly address the nation via television as well as radio. However, in spite of the fact that straight-to-camera broadcasting was made a good deal easier from 1957 onwards due to the availability of autocues, the advantages which the news interview offered politicians were such that by the end of the decade it had decisively replaced the scripted talk as the primary medium of political communication on television. In the case of radio, which by 1960 was no longer the pre-eminent broadcasting medium, the pace of change was much slower. Nevertheless, as we shall see shortly, a decisive shift away from the prepared statement towards the news interview did eventually take place in this medium in the 1960s.

In conclusion, in the second half of the 1950s television evolved into an important and expanding branch of journalism. One consequence of this was that television journalists increasingly found themselves in the position of generating, as well as reporting, public controversy. However, despite the fact that a number of influential public figures began to complain about some of the more provocative aspects of their conduct (see, for example, Day, 1961: 97-98), it was to be some time before broadcast journalists in general, and news interviewers in particular, were to be obliged to assume a less assertive and controversial role. Indeed the parameters within which they operated were still further extended during the early to mid-1960s.

#### 2.4 Further Developments: 1959-1967

The extension of the boundaries of the permissible during the early to mid-1960s was especially marked at the BBC where Hugh Greene, who had been appointed to the post of Director General in 1959, was permitting his staff to operate "with a verve and freedom (they) had never known before" (Black, 1972: 168). Accordingly, during this period, BBC television did not, as it had tended to do in the 1950s, simply follow in the footsteps of ITV. Rather, with a view to achieving and maintaining audience-parity with its rival,<sup>6</sup> it increasingly assumed the role of innovator, with restrictive practices and precedents being readily broken in the "healthy and exhilarating atmosphere" that Greene's leadership created (ibid.). As a result, although Independent Television continued to operate with considerable vigour, the BBC gradually replaced it as the primary agent of change in British broadcasting.

With the broadcast media in general, and BBC television in particular, operating with unprecedented freedom, the early and middle parts of the 1960s witnessed a number of significant developments in the field of news interviewing. Of these the most controversial was the use of increasingly aggressive styles of questioning in interviews with subjects who were allegedly guilty of some wrong-doing. Thus, at the turn of the decade, a group of Labour MP's accused the BBC (in angry letters to The Times) of having conducted a 'trial by television' after the president of the electricians' union had been relentlessly cross-questioned about allegations of ballot rigging on Panorama (Day, 1961). And subsequently, as a growing number of televised interviews began to resemble courtroom cross-examinations - with an interviewee as the

'defendant', an interviewer as the 'prosecuting counsel' and, on some occasions, a studio audience as the 'jury' - this type of complaint inevitably become both more common and more vehement.

However, while these so-called 'television trials' undoubtedly generated the greatest heat, they were by no means the only aspect of interviewing which aroused indignation. Thus, for example, the techniques used by John Freeman on his BBC television series Face to Face also attracted widespread criticism. In this series of half an hour interviews, Freeman (who carefully prepared for each programme by, amongst other things, consulting with a psychiatrist about its subject) sought to "reveal the private human beings behind the public persona of famous men" (Magee, 1966: 63).<sup>7</sup> In essence, his method was to probe quietly but remorselessly into what Tyrrell has called "sensitive areas of personality and emotion" (Tyrrell, 1981: 150). Some of his subjects, of course, simply refused to be drawn - the redoubtable Evelyn Waugh being a case in point. Others, however, proved to be more vulnerable to his style of questioning; and, as a result, his interviews often achieved a 'remarkable confessional intensity'. An idea of just how penetrating and gruelling his interviews could become in these circumstances is provided by the fact that in 1960 the broadcaster Gilbert Harding actually broke down while answering a series of (what many deemed to be merciless) questions concerning the death of his mother.

Due largely to the fact that they were widely regarded as 'theatres of cruelty',<sup>8</sup> the type of probing interviews in which Freeman specialised were not resurrected, at least in their purest form, after his series ended in the early 1960s. However, similar techniques to

those which he developed were subsequently used in the context of interviews with less experienced subjects on social documentary programmes. One of the more controversial of these techniques was the 'high-pressure silence', the purpose of which was to pressurise inexperienced interviewees into revealing attitudes and emotions which they might otherwise have preferred to conceal: or, as David Dimbleby has put it, to make "people speak when they (didn't) want to speak".<sup>9</sup> Tyrrell, in his primer for television journalists, describes this procedure (which is still occasionally used today) and the logic behind it in the following terms:

When a person is talking of a painful subject, he tends not to speak of it straight away, but to circle round it, half afraid and half fascinated. The interviewer's role is to listen quietly until the person stops talking - and then go on listening. The void of that silence has to be filled with something, and it is then, after a long and agonising wait, that a person is likely to say what is closest to his heart. (ibid. 150)

This technique was used extensively during the 1960s on programmes such as Man Alive and Whicker's World. Accordingly, it was not unusual to see an interviewer withholding a supplementary question so as to leave someone who in all probability had not been interviewed before to fill the silence. Of course, an interviewee could in principle have remained silent, and thus have 'waited out' the interviewer in such contexts. But in practice, confronted by a silent broadcasting unit, bright lights, a camera and a microphone, they would normally be embarrassed into some kind of reaction - often either 'blurt(ing) out things they didn't mean to say or break(ing) down'.<sup>10</sup>

In addition to the developments already mentioned, the early to mid-1960s also saw the more straightforward type of unrehearsed



investigative interview rise to something like its current significance in the political sphere. As was indicated above, one reason for this was that the "steady shift from the script to the unrehearsed interview" which had been initiated in the late 1950s not only gathered momentum in the medium of television, but also began to take hold in radio (Whale, 1977: 116). This latter development was largely stimulated by two factors. First, as radio's news and current affairs programmes began to emulate the more lively, robust and journalistic production formulas that were being used on television, it was gradually recognised that just as the political news interview made for good lively television, so too it made for good lively radio. Hence, although the pace of change was relatively slow, by the mid-1960s the weekday radio news magazine programme The World at One was already becoming known for its testing political interviews (Schlesinger, 1978: 44).

The second factor which underpinned the growth in the numbers of political interviews on radio was that the electorate, having grown used to seeing politicians being sharply interviewed on television, had started to become cynical about their addresses to the nation (Wyndham Goldie, 1977), which, according to Whale, were considered by many to belong "with a stratified order of society which had passed away" (Whale, 1977: 116). Thus, with the electorate generally attaching more credibility to the interview than to the direct address, the attractions of the former as a means of communicating political messages began to outweigh those of the latter in radio as well as television.

Another reason why the news interview assumed a more important role in politics in the 1960s was that many of the restrictions that had traditionally come into force during general election campaigns were

either relaxed or abolished. These restrictions, which were designed "to preserve total impartiality" (Butler and Rose, 1960: 75), were at their height during the monopoly years when they involved the BBC in "(excluding) from the air all references to politics apart from party political broadcasts" (ibid.). However even in 1959, when they were eased so that an election campaign could be covered by broadcast journalism for the first time, they were still strong enough to ensure that the vast majority of topical programmes were either "dropped or emasculated" (Harrison, 1965: 157). Against this background, then, the importance of political interviewing grew considerably in 1964 when both the BBC and ITV broke new ground by allowing political discussion to continue on the broadcast media after the dissolution of Parliament. For this innovatory move led to the establishment of the now long-standing convention whereby politicians use the unrehearsed news interview as a means of communicating with the nation during the course of general election campaigns.

A final reason for the fact that the political interview grew in stature in the early to mid-1960's was that, due to a continuing expansion of broadcast journalism which generated an increasing demand for interviewees, a far wider range of political figures than ever before began to appear in news interview contexts. Thus, whereas in the 1950s the subjects of political interviews were usually senior politicians, as the 1960s progressed it became commonplace not only for ordinary backbench MPs, but also for local councillors to be interviewed on television and radio.

In sum, with broadcast journalists exploring the boundaries of public acceptability, legality and impartiality in news interview

conduct, the early to mid-1960s saw the news interview evolve into a still sharper technique of investigative journalism. At the same time, as the movement away from the prepared statement gathered momentum, the news interview also assumed a more important role in the political arena. Consequently, by the middle of the 1960s, this form of communication was firmly established as one of the most significant, and controversial, aspects of broadcast media output.

## 2.5 Retrenchment: 1967-1985

The progressive extension of the frontiers of interviewing, outlined in the preceding sections, was followed by a period of gradual retrenchment during which interviewers began to settle down to a less assertive role. In the case of the so-called television trial, the first real sign of the adoption of a more cautious approach to news interviewing followed an ITV interview in 1967 in which David Frost questioned Emile Savundra about his alleged involvement in insurance fraud. In this interview, Frost, spurred on by a baying studio audience (which was composed largely of Savundra's 'victims'), pursued a line of questioning that probably came as close to outright interrogation as anything ever seen on British television. The significance of the interview in so far as news interviewer conduct is concerned was that, in addition to increasing the tempo of the public debate about 'trial by television', it was also "savagely condemned" in a Court of Law (Tracey, 1977: 108). This condemnation, which fostered a more reticent approach to the questioning of alleged wrong-doers, came from Lord Justice Salmon who sat in judgement when Savundra appealed against his subsequent conviction on the grounds that a fair trial had been prejudiced by pre-

trial publicity. Thus, in concluding his summing up, the appeal judge had the following to say about the Frost interview:

On any view the television interview with the appellant Savundra was deplorable. With no experience of television he was faced with a skilled interviewer whose clear object was to establish guilt before an audience of millions. None of the ordinary safeguards for fairness that exist in a Court of Law were observed, no doubt because they were not understood. They may seem prosaic to those engaged in the entertainment business, but they are the rocks on which freedom from oppression and tyranny have been established in this country...

The Court has no doubt that the television authorities and all those producing and appearing in televised programmes are conscious of their public responsibility and know also of the peril in which they would all stand if any such interview were ever to be televised in future. Trial by television is not to be tolerated in a civilised society (quoted in O'Higgins, 1972:42-43).

In the political context too there was a gradual, but general, re-definition of the ground rules informing news interviewer conduct. This development was a product of mounting political pressure which pushed the broadcast media as a whole back into a somewhat more passive posture. That such pressure should have arisen was perhaps inevitable for, as Harrison has noted, with broadcast news and current affairs programmes becoming both more numerous and more investigative, "the points of possible friction between broadcasters and politicians steadily multiplied" (Harrison, 1966: 145). All the same, due mainly to the fact that the Independent Television Authority displayed a discreet sensitivity to the wishes of politicians, the friction which did occur was generated for the most part by the activities of the BBC.

That some politicians, and in particular Labour politicians, resented the way in which the BBC dealt with political matters first became apparent in 1964 when the newly elected Labour Prime Minister,

Harold Wilson, and a sizeable section of his party, began to accuse the Corporation of being biased and irresponsible. This hostility then steadily intensified until in 1967 Wilson finally moved against the BBC by appointing Lord Hill, who had been at the helm of the ITA since 1963, as the Chairman of its board of governors. This action, along with a reshuffle of the ITV franchises a few weeks earlier, served as a stark reminder to the broadcasters of where the power lay. For, as Whale observes, the Prime Minister

was able to set over the BBC the representative of an organisation which stood for different aims in broadcasting and had done the BBC great harm (Whale, 1977: 53).

The significance of Hill's appointment lay essentially in the fact that his approach to broadcasting was considerably less adventurous (and thus more to the liking of Wilson) than that of the BBC's pioneering Director General, Hugh Greene. Thus, in the words of Tracey, whereas

Greene felt that broadcasters should lead public opinion, should be able to cast a critical eye over the political orthodoxies and institutions of the times, should in other words fulfil the role of political journalists, Hill sought the comfortable pastures of a 'middle ground' neither ahead nor behind but comfortably entrenched within, more responsible than journalistic (Tracey, 1977: 181).

The purpose of Hill's appointment, then, was clearly that of 'clipping the BBC's wings', though Wilson himself preferred to see it as a means of restoring "a scrupulous fairness.... in respect to comment on public affairs" (quoted in *ibid.* 181). In either case, it resulted in a feeling within the BBC "that the end of a golden age had been heralded (and) that Greene was bound to go" (*ibid.* 164).

As it happened, although Greene did subsequently retire in July 1968, his departure did not result in a sudden transformation of the climate at the BBC. At the same time, however, with a growing number of Conservative as well as Labour politicians becoming increasingly disposed to accuse the BBC of left- and right-wing bias, broadcasters continued to fear that "some politicians were set on crushing their independence" (Harrison, 1971: 200).

The crunch finally came in the early 1970s following the BBC's transmission - on 17 June 1971 - of a television programme called Yesterday's Men which, in the words of Smith involved

a light-hearted, at moments extremely cynical, look at the senior members of the erstwhile Labour administration, one year after their ousting at the General Election of June 1970 (Smith, 1973: 145).

This programme, which typified the irreverent approach to broadcasting that Green had encouraged in the 1960s, provoked a storm of outrage. For, as Heller notes,

not only did the participants feel that they had been unfairly ridiculed, but they also accused the BBC of "carefully calculated, deliberate and continuous deceit over a period of months in concealing the title and style of the programme from those who took part in it" (Heller, 1978:34).

The BBC responded to the political pressure which built up after Yesterday's Men by setting up a complaints commission. Far from stemming the tide of criticism, however, this move, which was subsequently emulated by the ITA, only served to reinforce the belief that the broadcasting authorities were no longer capable of safeguarding the public interest. And, as a result, with a significant number of politicians calling for overt Parliamentary control of broadcasting in

order to rectify this situation, both the BBC and ITV had little option but to assume a more cautious role. Thus, writing of the BBC in 1975, Kumar noted how:

Current BBC metaphors show a dramatic shift from those involving leading and directing, to those involving far more neutral concepts: essentially, the BBC is seen as the 'register' of the many different 'voices' in society, as the 'great stage' on which all the actors, great and small, parade and say their piece (Kumar, 1975: 246).

With the broadcasting organisations having continued to pursue a policy of holding what Kumar has aptly described as 'the middle ground' (ibid. 248), the parameters of acceptability in British television and radio have been considerably narrower since the early to mid-1970s than they were during the 1960s. This has meant that, in recent years, broadcast journalists have been required to operate in line with an interpretation of the concept of impartiality which, although it still provides for inquiry and investigation, nonetheless leaves them with less room for manoeuvre than was the case prior to the Yesterday's Men affair.

Inevitably this greater caution in television and radio broadcasting has had important implications for the role of the news interviewer. Thus, first, in line with other aspects of news and current affairs programming, news interviews have largely regressed from arenas in which public controversies were likely to be generated into areas in which existing public controversies are merely reported and discussed. Moreover, second, not only have interviewing styles become more benign, but, with experimentation having virtually ended in the early 1970s, they have also evolved for the most part into a set of

long-standing conventions, with the result that the questioning of news interviewees has taken on a somewhat more 'ritualistic' character.

In this chapter we have provided a brief outline of the development of the British news interview. In the next chapter, we turn to address the question of how empirical materials of the sort contained in the present thesis's data base may be analysed in an appropriate, coherent and sociologically relevant fashion.



Footnotes to Chapter Two

1. Until the inception of commercial radio this publically appointed body was known as the Independent Television Authority.
2. Thus, during this period the news interview was largely used in contexts where programme-participants were not thought to be capable of making a short informal speech (e.g. see Dimbleby, 1975: 214).
3. It should be noted, however, that Reith did support the growth of BBC News by gradually easing it from the grasp of the Press and Agency interests who, seeing it as a competitor, succeeded for many years in (1) limiting the number of broadcast news bulletins, and (2) restricting the BBC to reporting News Agency materials (Schlesinger, 1977).
4. An additional problem, of course, was the possibility of drying up.
5. This interview broke ground in that it was the first time that a Prime Minister had been subjected to indepth questioning by a single interviewer.
6. Greene's appointment came at a time when the BBC was only attracting around 30% of the viewing audience, and he was aware that, unless this situation improved, BBC requests for increased licence fees and a second television channel could well be refused.
7. As Day (1961: 96) notes, however, no British politician ever appeared on Face to Face.
8. c.f. We Ask the Questions, Omnibus, 21/4/81, BBC 1.
9. David Dimbleby, *ibid*.
10. *ibid*.

## Chapter Three

### APPROACHES TO THE ANALYSIS OF SPOKEN INTERACTION

#### 3.1 Introduction

At the present time, there are two major approaches to the study of naturally occurring spoken interaction: conversation analysis, which has been developed in the domain of sociology, and discourse analysis, which has been developed in the domain of linguistics. Both of these approaches are primarily concerned with describing how coherent or orderly social interaction is produced and understood. However, the analytic procedures that their exponents employ in pursuing this common interest are, as Levinson states, "largely incompatible" (Levinson, 1983: 286).

Given that the present thesis involves the use of conversation analytic research techniques, our central objective in this chapter is to make clear why the approach of conversation analysis is preferred to that of discourse analysis. Before proceeding to this task, however, it will be useful to provide an outline of some of the central tenets of speech act philosophy.

#### 3.2 Speech Act Philosophy

There are two reasons for taking speech act philosophy as our point of departure. The first is that it was due largely to the emergence of speech act theory in philosophy that it came to be widely recognised that language-use involves the performance of social actions and, as such, represents a proper object for sociological research. The second reason is that although they rely on hypothetical data and, by confining their

analyses to the isolated sentence, give little attention to the interactive character of language-use, the influence of the speech act philosophers is evident in both conversation analytic and discourse analytic research. Indeed, as will be seen, discourse analysis essentially involves, an attempt to apply the basic concepts and notions of speech act philosophy, together with the methods of theoretical linguistics, to the study of spoken interaction.

In the brief consideration of speech act philosophy which follows we will deal in turn with the work of J.L. Austin, who introduced the theory of speech acts into the philosophy of language, and J.R. Searle.

### 3.2.1. J.L. Austin

Austin developed his theory of speech acts over a period of some sixteen years and, as Lyons notes, "in its final version it is deliberately modified and extended in the course of its representation" (Lyons, 1977: 725). Thus, although he ultimately concludes that all utterances involve the performance of social actions, Austin begins the series of lectures in which he articulates the final version of his theory (How To Do Things With Words) by reiterating his earlier thesis that it is possible to draw a distinction between a class of utterances which involve speakers performing social actions and a class of utterances which do not.

In drawing this distinction, Austin is centrally concerned with undermining the contention of the logical positivists that (i)

the business of a 'statement' can only be to 'describe' some state of affairs, or to 'state some fact', which it must do either truly or falsely (Austin, 1962: 1),

and that (ii) any 'statement' which cannot be tested for its truth or falsity is strictly speaking meaningless (ibid. 2).<sup>1</sup> Thus he sets up the distinction by drawing our attention to declarative sentences which, although they have no truth-value, are nonetheless clearly meaningful:

- (a) 'I do (sc. 'take this woman to be my lawful wedded wife') - as uttered in the course of the marriage ceremony.
- (b) 'I name this ship the Queen Elizabeth' - as uttered when smashing the bottle against the stern.
- (c) 'I give and bequeath my watch to my brother' - as occurring in a will.
- (d) 'I bet you sixpence it will rain tomorrow.' (ibid. 5)

Austin's basic proposal is that utterances such as these are meaningful (without being empirically verifiable) because, in spite of their grammatical form, they are not in fact statements at all, but rather instances of a class of utterance-types whose announcement involves the performance of social actions.<sup>2</sup> Hence, in challenging the logical positivists' view of meaning, Austin distinguishes between two classes of fully meaningful utterances; namely, performative utterances which involve a speaker doing something (promising, betting, warning etc.), and constative utterances which involve a speaker merely saying something (statements, assertions, descriptions etc.).<sup>3</sup>

In developing the performative-constative dichotomy, Austin (ibid. 13-38) points to the conventional nature of performatives and suggests that the following conditions must be satisfied if a performative is to succeed or be happy:

1. There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, that procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances, and further,
2. the particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked.

3. The procedure must be executed by all participants both correctly and
4. completely (ibid. 14-15).

Austin contends that in the event of one or more of these 'felicity conditions' not being met a performative will misfire. That is to say, it will be unhappy or infelicitous. So, while constative utterances are either true or false, performative utterances are either happy or unhappy.

Having thus drawn a distinction between performative utterances, which are subject to a test of happiness or felicity, and constative utterances, which are subject to a test of truth, Austin attempts to find some criterion (or set of criteria) which will distinguish one from the other. In so doing, he begins by observing that all of his initial examples have performatives finding expression in the grammatical form of first person singular subject and present simple active verb (e.g., 'I promise', 'I bet', 'I do'). However, any thoughts that all performatives might take this form are quickly dispelled. For Austin immediately demonstrates that performatives are also expressed in a range of alternative forms.

In setting out some of these alternatives, Austin suggests that performative utterances may, according to their grammatical form, be classified as either explicit or implicit performatives. Explicit performatives are those, like his initial examples, which

begin with or include some highly significant and unambiguous expression such as 'I bet', 'I promise', 'I bequeath' - an expression very commonly also used in naming the act which, in making such an utterance, I am performing - e.g. betting, promising, bequeathing, & c (ibid. 32).

Implicit or primary performatives, by contrast, do not include such expressions - that is, they do not have a verb (bet, promise, order, etc.) from which the name of the activity being performed is derivable. By way of example, Austin observes that

We can on occasion use the utterance 'go' to achieve practically the same as we achieve by the utterance 'I order you to go': and we should say cheerfully in either case, in describing what someone did, that he ordered me to go (ibid.).

The use of implicit performatives clearly complicates matters. In particular, it may be unclear as to what kind of action an utterance is performing. For example, in the case of the imperative 'go', it may be uncertain

whether the utterer is ordering (or is purporting to order) me to go or merely advising, entreating, or whatnot me to go (ibid. 33).

Indeed, in some cases it may be difficult to determine whether an utterance is performative at all, since

very commonly the same sentence is used on different occasions of utterance in both ways, performative and constative (ibid. 67).

Consider the utterance 'There is a bull in the field'. This could constitute either a warning, in which case it would be a performative, or a description of the scenery, in which case it would be a constative.

Confronted with implicit performatives such as these, Austin has no option but to conclude that "there is no purely verbal criterion by which to distinguish the performative from the constative utterance" (Austin, 1971: 20). Nonetheless, he does not as yet abandon the search for some means of differentiating these two classes of utterance. Rather, he

considers the possibility that "any utterance which is in fact performative should be (in principle) reducible or expandable or analysable" into the form 'I+ present simple active verb' - that is, into the form in which the explicit performative generally finds expression (Austin, 1962: 61-62). Thus, in terms of this line of analysis:

'Out' is equivalent to 'I declare, pronounce, give, or call you out' (when it is performative: it need not be, for example if you are called out by someone not the umpire or recorded 'out' by the scorer). 'Guilty' is equivalent to 'I find, pronounce, deem you to be 'guilty'. 'You are warned that the bull is dangerous' is equivalent to 'I, John Jones, warn you that the bull is dangerous' (ibid. 62).

Austin stresses that utterances (such as 'out') which do not include an explicit performative formula will always suffer (or benefit) from a degree of ambiguity or equivocation or vagueness. Nevertheless, he puts forward the suggestion that their expansion into the form 'I+ present simple active verb' is facilitated by the use of a range of speech-devices - such as mood, tone of voice, gesture, and the circumstances of the utterance - which serve both to indicate that a given utterance is performative and to provide at least some of the resources necessary for the determination of that utterance's precise force.

In sum, then, it is now being suggested that a criterion for distinguishing performatives from constatives might be that the former are either expressed in the form 'I+ present simple active verb' or else are analysable into that form.

However, no sooner has Austin formulated this as a possible criterion than he is undermining it with a list of difficulties that threaten its credibility. Of these difficulties, the most damaging stem from the discovery that not all utterances of the form 'I+ present simple

active verb' constitute performatives as currently defined. Thus, for example, although it exhibits this grammatical form, 'I bet him (every morning) sixpence that it will rain' is clearly a constative utterance. For it comprises a description of how the speaker "habitually behaves" (ibid. 64).

The question now arises, then, as to how one decides whether an 'I+ present simple active' utterance is performative or constative. In point of fact, this would not be too difficult a question to answer if all utterances of this form were either unequivocally performative or, as in our example, unequivocally constative. But, as Austin notes:

There seem to be clear cases where the very same formula seems sometimes to be an explicit performative and sometimes to be a descriptive, and may even trade on this ambivalence (ibid. 78).

Examples are to be found in the second of the following lists:

Explicit Performative	Not Pure (half descriptive)	Descriptive
I apologise	I am sorry	I repent
I censure/I criticise	I blame	I am disgusted by
I approve	I approve of	I feel approval of
I bid you welcome	I welcome you	

(ibid. 83)

So here we find a list of expressions, all of the form 'I+ present simple active verb', whose performative-constative status is not readily apparent. Their ambivalence in this respect can be clearly demonstrated by reference to the sentence 'I am sorry' which, as Austin points out,

sometimes is equivalent to 'I apologise', sometimes describes my feelings, sometimes does both at once (ibid. 87).



In view of these cases, Austin attempts to provide a set of criteria for distinguishing between pure performative phrases (such as 'I apologise') and those expressions (such as 'I am sorry') which, though they bear a strong resemblance to the pure performative, can function both as performatives and constatives.<sup>4</sup> The criteria which he comes up with consist of a series of tests, four in all, for deciding whether an utterance of the form 'I+ present simple active verb' is a pure explicit performative. These tests are presented as a set of questions to be asked of utterances which display this grammatical form.

The first of the questions that Austin suggests we ask is: "Does it make sense (or the same sense) to ask 'But did he really?'?" (ibid. 83-84). If an utterance is a pure performative, the answer to this question will be no; for its announcement will unquestionably constitute the performing of an act. By way of illustrating this, Austin compares the half-descriptive 'I welcome you' with the pure explicit performative 'I bid you welcome':

When someone says 'I welcome you' or 'I bid you welcome', we may say 'I wonder if he really did welcome him?' though we could not say in the same way 'I wonder whether he really does bid him welcome?' (ibid. 74).

A second test is to ask: "Could he be doing the action without uttering the (words)?" (ibid. 84). Once again the answer should be no if the utterance concerned is a pure explicit performative. Thus, for example, while one does not need to say anything to be sorry, one cannot perform the act of apologising without uttering the appropriate words.

A third test involves asking: "Could he do it deliberately?; Could he be willing to do it?" (ibid.). Here it is suggested that if an utterance of the form 'I+ present simple active verb' is a pure

performative, then we should (in some cases at least) be able to insert before the verb

some such adverb as 'deliberately' or such an expression as 'I am willing to': because (possibly) if the utterance is the doing of an action, then it is surely something we ought to be able (on occasion) to do deliberately or be willing to do (ibid. 80).

Hence one can be 'willing to apologise', and one can 'deliberately bid someone welcome'. On the other hand, however, one cannot be 'willing to be sorry'.<sup>5</sup>

A final test is to ask of an utterance: "Could it be literally false...?" (ibid. 84). Given that Austin's notion of performatives is as yet confined to non-empirically verifiable utterances, it follows that in the context of pure explicit performatives the answer to this question will always be no. So, for example, while the half-descriptive 'I am sorry' can be assessed in terms of truth or falsity (since one can say one is sorry without actually being so), the pure performative 'I apologise' can only be assessed as felicitous or infelicitous.

Austin, then, provides four tests which serve to isolate pure explicit performatives from those verb phrases of the same form whose performative-constative status is not fixed. But, despite the fact that the question remains open as to how one recognises whether the latter represent performatives or constatives, Austin does not now attempt to deal with this problem. Instead he turns to consider a class of utterances which prove troublesome not only for the search for a criterion for performatives, but also for the basic hypothesis that truth-conditionally assessed utterances (constatives) do not involve the performing of an action. In these cases,

the main body of the utterance has generally or often the straightforward form of a 'statement', but there is an explicit performative verb at its head which shows how the 'statement' is to be fitted into the context of conversation, interlocution, dialogue, or in general of exposition (ibid. 85).

Austin refers to this class of utterances as expositives or expositional performatives and provides the following hypothetical examples:

'I argue (or argue) that there is no backside to the moon'.  
'I conclude (or infer) that there is no backside to the moon'.  
'I testify that there is no backside to the moon'.  
'I admit (or concede) that there is no backside to the moon'.  
'I prophesy (or predict) there there is no backside to the moon'. (ibid.)

Cases such as these, then, appear to cut right across the distinction between constatives which are either true or false and performatives which are either happy or unhappy. For, while the main body of such utterances can be tested for their truth or falsity, the verb phrases which precede them satisfy all the criteria for pure performatives.

Still more disturbing, however, is the fact that even verbs such as 'state' and 'maintain' turn out to meet Austin's performative tests. Thus, Austin discovers that in some instances

the whole utterances seems essentially to be true or false despite its performative characteristics (ibid. 89).

It is at this point that Austin pauses to take stock of the problems that have beset his attempts to locate a criterion for performatives.

Now we failed to find a grammatical criterion for performatives, but we thought that perhaps we could insist that every performance could be in principle put into the form of an explicit performative, and then we could make a list of performative verbs. Since then we have found, however, that it is often not easy to be sure that, even when it is apparently

in explicit form, an utterance is performative or that it is not; and typically anyway, we shall have utterances beginning 'I state that...' which seem to satisfy the requirements of being performative, yet which surely are the making of statements, and surely are essentially true or false (ibid. 91).

In view of these various considerations, Austin finally abandons the performative-constative distinction that he has thus far sought to defend, and proposes instead that all utterances are performative. Thus, in its final version, Austin's theory of speech acts recognises that 'stating' and 'describing' are as much social acts as 'apologising', 'promising' and the like.

Having resolved that in fact all utterances involve the performance of social actions, Austin proceeds to reconsider "the senses in which to say something is to do something" (ibid. 121). In so doing, he argues that in saying something a speaker can perform three kinds of acts simultaneously: (i) a locutionary act, (ii) an illocutionary act and (iii) a perlocutionary act (ibid. 94-108).

According to Austin, the locutionary act

is roughly equivalent to uttering a certain sentence with a certain sense and reference, which again is roughly equivalent to 'meaning' in the traditional sense (ibid. 109).

As for the illocutionary act this is the social action which is performed in and through saying something (promising, warning, ordering, etc.). It constitutes the force of an utterance.

Finally, the perlocutionary act is that which

we bring about or achieve by saying something, such as convincing, persuading, deterring, and even, say, surprising or misleading (ibid.).

It is, in other words, the effect which an utterance has on the actions, thoughts, or beliefs of its recipient(s).

In sum, then, Austin isolates three basic types of act which may be accomplished through the production of an utterance:

Act A or Locution

He said to me, 'You can't do that'.

Act B or Illocution

He protested against my doing it.

Act C or Perlocution

He stopped me, he brought me to my senses, & c. (ibid. 102)

Lest there be any confusion, it should be stressed that it is not being suggested here that a speaker has the option of performing one or another of these acts. According to Austin's theory, to perform a locutionary act is to perform an illocutionary act. And, although he is of the opinion that an utterance need not necessarily perform a perlocutionary act, he nonetheless maintains that the three acts are normally performed simultaneously.

Austin's theory of speech acts has, since his death, been adopted and modified by a large number of ordinary language philosophers. Of these scholars it is probably J.R. Searle, with his influential systematisation of Austin's theory, who has produced the most significant work. Accordingly, it is to Searle's contributions to speech act philosophy that we now turn.

### 3.2.2. J.R. Searle

As an advocate of speech act theory, Searle is at one with Austin in proposing that (i) "speaking a language is performing speech acts" (Searle, 1969: 16) which are (ii) "in general made possible by and (....) performed in accordance with certain rules for the use of linguistic

elements" (ibid.). However, whereas Austin was mainly concerned with establishing the case for the first of these propositions, Searle, with this matter widely regarded as more or less settled, focuses in detail on the second. Thus, Searle attempts to formulate the rules which purportedly govern the 'happy' performances of a small number of illocutionary acts and, in so doing, to develop a framework of analysis that is capable of handling illocutionary acts in general; that is, a framework which will facilitate the formulation of rules for any given illocutionary act.

In his major work, Speech Acts (1969), Searle pursues this concern by seeking to isolate rules for the production of several kinds of explicit performatives. Before proceeding to formulate these rules, however, he prepares the ground for his analysis by discussing, amongst other things, the notion of propositions and the notion of rules.

In dealing with the first of these topics, Searle - while accepting the notions of the illocutionary act and the perlocutionary act - rejects Austin's concept of the locutionary act, and proposes in its place the propositional act. This act, he argues, is composed of two ancillary acts, namely, the act of referring to some 'object', 'entity' or 'particular', and the act of predicating some action or attribute of that to which one has referred. Searle illustrates the distinctiveness of his notion of the propositional act through a brief consideration of the following sentences:

1. Sam smokes habitually.
2. Does Sam smoke habitually?
3. Sam, smoke habitually!
4. Would that Sam smoked habitually. (ibid. 22)

In uttering these sentences a speaker is performing different kinds of illocutionary acts: 1 is an assertion, 2 is a question, 3 is an order, and 4 expresses a wish or desire. Nevertheless, in each case (s)he

refers to or mentions or designates a certain object Sam, and (...) predicates the expression "smokes habitually" (or one of its inflections) of the object referred to (ibid. 23).

So, according to Searle, these sentences, despite having different illocutionary forces, all involve the performing of an identical propositional act. In other words, they share a common propositional content.<sup>6</sup>

In the light of these observations, Searle goes on to argue that, since it is thus possible to distinguish between the propositional content and the illocutionary force of an utterance, it follows that an utterance will normally include two distinctive elements, *which can be termed "the propositional indicator and the illocutionary force indicator"* (ibid. 30).<sup>7</sup> As regards the second of these devices, which is to play a crucial role in his subsequent analysis, Searle contends that the purpose of this element is to show

how the proposition is to be taken, or to put it another way, what illocutionary force the utterance is to have; that is, what illocutionary act the speaker is performing in the utterance of the sentence (ibid.).

Examples of such function-indicating devices are said to be

word order, stress, intonation, contour, punctuation, the mood of the verb, and the so-called performative verbs (ibid.).

Shortly we shall see that the distinction which Searle draws here between the propositional content of an utterance and the illocutionary

act it is performing provides an important resource for his analysis of the rules which purportedly underpin the non-defective performance of illocutionary acts. First, however, a brief outline of his remarks on the notion of rules is necessary.

Drawing on the work of Rawls (1955), Searle distinguishes between two types of rule: regulative rules, which control an existing form of behaviour, and constitutive rules, which create or define the behaviour itself. The difference between these two types of rule is essentially this: If one were to disregard a regulative rule, one could still be participating in the activity that it is designed to control. However, if one were to disregard a constitutive rule, one would no longer be participating in the activity that it defines; one would be doing something else. Thus, while regulative rules generally take the form of imperatives,

"Do X" or "If Y do X" (ibid. 34).

constitutive rules normally have the form

"X counts as Y" or "X counts as Y in context C" (ibid. 35).

The question arises, then, as to whether the rules for the performances of illocutionary acts are regulative, constitutive, or a combination of the two types. Searle argues that they constitutive:

I have said that the hypothesis of this book is that speaking a language is performing acts according to rules. The form this hypothesis will take is that the semantic structure of a language may be regarded as a conventional realisation of a series of sets of underlying constitutive rules, and that speech acts are acts characteristically performed by uttering expressions in accordance with these sets of constitutive rules (ibid. 36-37).



In attempting to formulate some of these constitutive rules, Searle takes the illocutionary act of promising as his "initial quarry" (ibid. 54). To simplify matters, he ignores "marginal, fringe, and partially defective promises" (ibid. 55) and, moreover, confines his discussion to "full blown explicit" cases (ibid.).<sup>8</sup> In other words, he restricts his analysis to a "simple and idealised case" of promising which involves the use of the explicit illocutionary force indicating device 'I promise' (ibid. 56).

Searle begins by explicating what he takes to be the necessary and sufficient conditions for the non-defective performance of a full blown promise (see ibid. 57-62). He then extracts from these conditions "a set of rules for the use of the illocutionary force indicating device" (ibid. 62). These rules are set out as follows:

The semantical rules for the use of any illocutionary force indicating device Pr for promising are:

Rule 1. Pr is to be uttered only in the context of a sentence (or larger stretch of discourse) T, the utterance of which predicates some future act A of the speaker S. I call this the propositional content rule.

Rule 2. Pr is to be uttered only if the hearer H would prefer S's doing A to his not doing A, and S believes H would prefer S's doing A to his not doing A.

Rule 3. Pr is to be uttered only if it is not obvious to both S and H that S will do A in the normal course of events. I call rules 2 and 3 preparatory rules.

Rule 4. Pr is to be uttered only if S intends to do A. I call this the sincerity rule.

Rule 5. the utterance of Pr counts as the undertaking of an obligation to do A. I call this the essential rule.  
(ibid. 62-63)

Having formulated these rules, Searle observes that if his analysis

is of any general interest beyond the case of promising, then it would seem that these distinctions should carry over to other types of illocutionary act (ibid. 64).

Accordingly, he subsequently seeks to demonstrate that the analytic framework he has developed with respect to the act of promising is capable of handling a range of speech acts. To be precise, he uses the framework to formulate rules for the acts of requesting, asserting, questioning, thanking, advising, warning, greeting and congratulating (see ibid. 66-67).

Searle's work on illocutionary acts does not end here however. For there is a crucial issue which he has yet to consider in detail, namely, the existence of what Austin termed primary performatives. In turning to address this issue in his paper Indirect Speech Acts (1975), Searle thus confronts what is for the speech act theorists a major problem - indirection in human communication.

The problem of indirection is basically that utterances which contain the function-indicating device for one type of action frequently involve the performing of another kind of action. For example, as Searle recognises, an utterance containing interrogative illocutionary force - indicating devices (such as "Could you pass the salt?") may be issued to perform a request. Similarly, the announcement of an utterance formed syntactically as a statement (e.g. "I'll do it for you") may constitute the performance of a promise.

The use of such indirect speech acts, then, clearly creates difficulties for speech act theory. For, as Searle himself notes:

This lack of neat correspondence between the form of words used in a speech act and its illocutionary force seems to contradict the premise that speech acts are made possible by and performed

in accordance with certain rules for the use of linguistic elements (ibid.).

One way in which speech act theorists, within linguistics as well as philosophy, have sought to handle the problem of indirect speech acts has been to posit the existence of sets of rules which govern their performance (see e.g. Gordon and Lakoff, 1971). Here it is suggested that if the literal force of a sentence<sup>9</sup> is ruled out by the context in which it is uttered, then a set of rules come into operation which convert the force of the utterance into one that is contextually viable. It is proposed, in other words, that a set of, what Levinson (1983) has called, 'force-conversion' rules operate in combination with the rules for the use of illocutionary force indicators.

Not all of the speech act theorists, however, regard it as necessary to propose the existence of this additional layer of rules. Searle, for one, rejects such an approach, suggesting instead that

the apparatus necessary to explain the indirect part of indirect speech acts includes a theory of speech acts, certain general principles of cooperative conversation (...), and mutually shared factual background information of the speaker and hearer, together with an ability on the part of the hearer to make inferences (Searle, 1975: 61).

Before describing in detail how this apparatus functions, Searle asserts that indirect speech acts involve the performance of two illocutionary acts: "the secondary illocutionary act (which) is literal, (and) the primary illocutionary act (which) is not literal" (ibid. 62). So, for example, were the sentence "can you pass the salt?" to be uttered as a request, Searle would want to argue that it continues to perform the secondary act of questioning.

With this point made, Searle attempts to construct a theoretical apparatus capable of explaining a hearer (h) "understanding the primary illocution of (an) utterance" (ibid. 64). In embarking on this task, he announces his intention of focussing on indirect directives or requests, and introduces a list of six types of sentence that "could quite standardly be used to make indirect requests and other directives such as orders" (ibid.):

GROUP 1: Sentences concerning H's ability to perform A:

Can you reach the salt?  
Could you be a little more quiet?  
Have you got change for a dollar?

GROUP 2: Sentences concerning S's wish or want that H will do A:

I would like you to go now.  
I hope you'll do it.  
I wish you wouldn't do that.

GROUP 3: Sentences concerning H's doing A:

Would you kindly get off my foot?  
Aren't you going to eat your cereal?  
Will you quit making that awful racket?

GROUP 4: Sentences concerning H's desire or willingness to do A:

Would you be willing to write a letter of recommendation for me?  
Would you mind not making so much noise?

GROUP 5: Sentences concerning reasons for doing A:

You should leave immediately.  
Why don't you be quiet?  
It might help if you shut up.

GROUP 6: Sentences embedding one of these elements inside another; also, sentences, embedding an explicit directive illocutionary verb inside one of these contexts:

Would you mind awfully if I asked you if you could write me a letter of recommendation?

Would it be too much if I suggested that you could possibly make a little less noise?  
(ibid. 66-67)

Searle compares these six sentence-types with the felicity conditions on directive illocutionary acts:

Directive (Request)

Preparatory condition	He is able to perform A
Sincerity condition	S wants H to do A
Propositional content condition	S predicates a future act A of H
Essential condition	Counts as an attempt by S to get H to do A (ibid. 71)

and concludes that they

can be reduced to three types: those having to do with felicity conditions on the performance of a directive illocutionary act, those having to do with reasons for doing the act, and those embedding one element inside another one (ibid. 71-72).

Thus, according to Searle, the first of these classes comprises Groups 1-3 (Group 1 being concerned with the preparatory condition, Group 2 with the sincerity condition, and Group 3 with the propositional content condition), while the second class comprises Groups 4 and 5, and the third class Group 6.

On the basis of this classification, Searle proposes the following generalisations:

1. S can make an indirect request (or other directive) by either asking whether or stating that a preparatory condition concerning H's ability to do A obtains
2. S can make an indirect directive by either asking whether or stating that the propositional content condition obtains
3. S can make an indirect directive by stating that the sincerity condition obtains, but not by asking whether it obtains
4. S can make an indirect directive by either stating that or asking whether there are good or overriding reasons for doing A, except where the reason is that H wants or wishes, etc., to do A, in which case he can only ask whether H wants, wishes, etc., to do A. (ibid. 72)

Searle emphasises that these are not rules. So, for example, while it is a rule that for a directive to function happily S should want H to do A (see ibid. 71; Searle, 1969: 66), it is not a rule that S can perform an indirect directive by stating that the sincerity condition obtains (Generalisation 3). Hence, for Searle,

the theoretical task is to show how that generalisation will be a consequence of the rule, together with certain other information, namely, the factual background information and the general principles of conversation (Searle, 1975: 72).

Searle undertakes this task with a consideration of an indirect request of the form "Can you pass the salt?". Specifically, he argues that in such cases the hearer (H) might reason roughly as follows:

- STEP 1: S has asked me a question as to whether I have the ability to pass the salt (fact about the conversation).
- STEP 2: I assume that he is cooperating in the conversation and that therefore his utterance has some aim or point (principles of conversational cooperation).
- STEP 3: The conversational setting is not such as to indicate a theoretical interest in my salt-passing ability (factual background information).

- STEP 4: Furthermore, he probably already knows that the answer to the question is yes (factual background information). (This step facilitates the move to Step 5, but is not essential.)
- STEP 5: Therefore, his utterance is probably not just a question. It probably has some ulterior illocutionary point (inference from Steps 1, 2, 3, and 4). What can it be?
- STEP 6: A preparatory condition for any directive illocutionary act is the ability of H to perform the act predicated in the propositional content condition (theory of speech acts).
- STEP 7: Therefore, X has asked me a question the affirmative answer to which would entail that the preparatory condition for requesting me to pass the salt is satisfied (inference from Steps 1 and 6).
- STEP 8: We are now at dinner and people normally use salt at dinner; they pass it back and forth, etc. (background information).
- STEP 9: He has therefore alluded to the satisfaction of a preparatory condition for a request whose obedience conditions it is quite likely he wants me to bring about (inference from Steps 7 and 8).
- STEP 10: Therefore, in the absence of any other plausible illocutionary point, he is probably requesting me to pass him the salt (inference from Steps 5 and 9).  
(ibid. 73-74)

The strategy adopted by H, then, is to first establish that the primary illocutionary force of the utterance is not that which is indicated by its function-indicating devices (Steps 1-5), and to then find out what kind of act the primary illocutionary act is (Steps 6-10).<sup>10</sup>

Searle contends that all indirect speech acts can be analysed in this fashion and that, accordingly, the theoretical apparatus he has developed "will suffice to explain the general phenomenon of indirect illocutionary acts" (ibid. 64).<sup>11</sup>

Prior to this discussion of the work of the Austin and Searle, apart from pointing to the significance of speech act philosophy, we also touched on two of its deficiencies. These were, first, that it is centred on the isolated sentence and thus neglects the interactive character of talk and, second, that its analyses are confined to hypothetical data. In view of these considerations, then, the question arises as to whether its basic notions are applicable to, and supported by, the study of naturally occurring social interaction.

Now, as will become clear in what follows, the exponents of the two major empirically oriented approaches to the study of language usage take up opposing positions on this issue. On the one hand, the discourse analysts contend that, suitably adapted and modified, the concepts of speech act theory, if integrated with techniques derived from theoretical linguistics, provide an appropriate analytic framework within which to analyse empirical materials. The conversation analysts, on the other hand, while acknowledging the important role of speech act theory in forwarding the view that language comprises a vehicle for social action, propose that an examination of actual talk in fact reveals serious problems with its central tenets.

We have already stated a preference for the latter perspective. So let us begin our consideration of the two research traditions by outlining the discourse analytic approach and our reasons for rejecting it.



### 3.3 Discourse Analysis

#### 3.3.1 The Methods of Discourse Analysis

Throughout the past thirty years the dominant theoretical paradigms in linguistics have been occupied with the explication of the structural aspects of the sentence. Accordingly, when linguists began to employ the speech act concept in the early 1970s they generally did so in the context of analyses which treated sentences as self-contained units. This meant that, like the speech act philosophers upon whose work they were building, they gave little or no attention to interactional considerations.<sup>12</sup>

In recent years, however, a growing number of scholars trained in the methodology and techniques of linguistics have begun to apply the basic notions of speech act theory to the study of supra-sentential structures in naturally occurring interaction. And this has led to the emergence within linguistics of an approach to the study of language - known as discourse analysis - which is concerned not with the internal organisation of individual sentences, but rather with the organisational principles which underlie the coherent or orderly production of successive utterances in spoken interaction.

The central tenet of this approach is that coherence in discourse is a product of sequencing rules which, stated over speech act (or related) categories, govern the order in which such acts can properly occur. These rules are proposed to delimit well-formed sequences of interaction (coherent discourse) from ill-formed sequences of interaction (incoherent discourse) in much the same way that grammatical rules delimit well-formed from ill-formed sentences. Thus, in adapting and modifying the methods and concepts of both speech act philosophy and theoretical

linguistics, discourse analytic researchers claim that it is possible to account for the accomplishment of coherence in discourse in terms of (i) rules of production and interpretation which "translate utterances into the acts that they perform" (Levinson, 1983: 96), and (ii) sequencing rules of a 'syntactic' nature which provide for any given speech act (or related category) following another in an orderly and coherent fashion.

Of the various versions of discourse analysis, the most influential are probably to be found in Labov and Fanshel's Therapeutic Discourse (1977), and in a series of publications by Sinclair, Coulthard and other members of the English Language Research Group at Birmingham University. It will be useful therefore to briefly consider some of this work in order to illustrate the types of findings that have resulted from the use of discourse analytic research techniques.

In attempting to give an account of how coherence in a therapeutic interview is produced and understood, Labov and Fanshel (1977) formulate several discourse rules. These involve rules of interpretation for a small number of speech acts that purportedly occur in the session under consideration, and rules of sequencing that purportedly operate upon those acts. Since Labov and Fanshel consider rules of production and interpretation to be 'quite complex' and rules of sequencing to be 'relatively simple' (ibid. 110), it is the former which receive the bulk of their attention.

An example of the interpretative rules that Labov and Fanshel specify in order to explain how an utterance comes to be heard as an instance of a particular type of speech act is their Rule of Requests (for action). This rule, which is based on the assumption that the

imperative "is the unmarked grammatical form of a request for action" (ibid. 77), is formulated as follows:

If A addresses to B an imperative specifying an action X at a time  $T_1$ , and B believes that A believes that

- 1a X should be done (for a purpose Y) [need for the action]
- b B would not do X in the absence of the request [need for the request]
- 2 B has the ability to do X (with an instrument Z)
- 3 B has the obligation to do X or is willing to do it
- 4 A has the right to tell B to do X

then A is heard as making a valid request for action.

(ibid.)

Labov and Fanshel suggest that this rule serves as a rule of production as well as a rule of interpretation:

The Rule of Requests is written in a form that applies equally to the speaker and the hearer. Operating under the conditions of this rule, the speaker constructs an utterance that will be recognised as a valid request; the hearer simultaneously is constrained to hear it as such (ibid. 81).

Since their Rule of Requests only applies to cases in which there is a close fit between the syntactic form of an utterance and its illocutionary force, Labov and Fanshel - who, like discourse analysts in general, are advocates of the force conversion rule hypothesis - go on to offer an additional rule which proposedly specifies the pre-requisites for an utterance that is not imperative in form to be heard as an indirect request (for action). This rule is related to the conditions of recognisability contained in the Rule of Requests, and it closely resembles Searle's analysis of the same phenomenon - though, as we have

seen, Searle did not regard it to be necessary to posit the existence of 'force-conversion' rules in order to explain indirection in human communication:

If A makes to B a request for information or an assertion to B about

- a. the existential status of an action X to be performed by B
- b. the consequence of performing an action X
- c. the time  $T_1$  that an action X might be performed by B
- d. any of the preconditions for a valid request for X as given in the Rule of Requests

and all the other preconditions (of a request for action) are in effect, then A is heard as making a valid request of B for the action X. (ibid. 82)

Labov and Fanshel's analysis of requests also provides an example of the rules of sequencing which they formulate in order to account for the production of coherent action sequences. Thus, having introduced their rules for the interpretation of requests, Labov and Fanshel suggest that, in the context of utterances which involve the performance of requests, a sequencing rule comes in to operation which stipulates that:

Requests must be acknowledged and responded to. (ibid. 100)

This rule, Labov and Fanshel argue, effectively provides recipients with three basic options: to (i) "give the response requested - that is, perform the action or give the information", to (ii) "put off the request", or to (iii) "refuse, with or without an accounting" (ibid. 110-111). Hence, according to Labov and Fanshel, only those utterances which involve the performance of one or other of these activities constitute

orderly or coherent interactional contributions following the production of requests.

The discourse analytic research which has been conducted by those associated with the English Language Research Group at the University of Birmingham involves the use of an analytical framework which was devised in the first instance by Sinclair et al. (1972) in an SSRC funded study of classroom interaction. The ultimate aim of the Birmingham group is to develop a comprehensive descriptive system that *is capable of handling* all types of discourse. To date, however, in view of the complexity of mundane conversation, they have concentrated for the most part on various forms of institutional interaction in which such matters as the management of topic and the ordering of speakers are more highly structured than in everyday talk.<sup>13</sup>

The central component of the descriptive system which the Birmingham discourse analysts are currently in the process of developing and refining comprises a rank scale model of discourse. The basic structure of this rank scale, which is based on the principles outlined for grammatical models by Michael Halliday (1961), is as follows:

Interaction  
v  
Transaction  
v  
Exchange  
v  
Move  
v  
Act

where, as Burton notes, Interactions "are made up of Transactions, Transactions are made up of Exchanges, Exchanges are made up of Moves, and Moves are made up of Acts" (Burton, 1981: 28).

In a series of attempts to provide exhaustive rule-based descriptions of the options open to speakers in social interaction, the Birmingham group have been primarily concerned with the units which they refer to as exchanges. Here their basic contention is that exchanges involve a minimum of two moves: "an initiating move by a first speaker and a responding move by a second speaker" (Wells, MacLure and Montgomery, 1981: 74). Initiating moves, it is argued, involve the performance of such acts as "'elicitations' (requesting information), 'informatives' (giving information)" and "directives (requesting action)" (Montgomery, forthcoming); and these variously require that second speakers produce 'replies', 'acknowledgements', or appropriate actions as responding moves. In addition to initiating and responding moves, it is proposed, exchanges may also involve a third, follow-up move, consisting of such acts as 'accept', 'evaluation' and 'comment'. Thus, according to the Birmingham group, the production of coherent discourse can be explained in terms of two-part and, as in the cases which follow, three-part exchange structures:

(1) (Montgomery, forthcoming)

Doctor:	What were you doing at the time?	INITIATION: elicitation
Patient:	Coming home in the car	RESPONSE: reply
Doctor:	I see	FOLLOW-UP: accept

(2) (Montgomery, forthcoming)

Teacher:	If your mum was going to make a cardigan or a jumper what material would she use?	INITIATION: elicitation
Pupil:	Wool	RESPONSE: reply
Teacher:	Wool	FOLLOW-UP: accept
	good girl	evaluate

In turning to that part of their analysis which is concerned with the relationship between the form and function of utterances, we may begin by noting that the Birmingham group have specified a number of rules for the interpretation of indirect speech acts. Thus Sinclair and Coulthard suggest that the following rules "predict when a declarative or interrogative will be realising something other than a statement or a question" in the context of classroom interaction (Coulthard, 1977: 109)

#### Rule 1

An interrogative clause is to be interpreted as a command to do if it fulfils all of the following conditions;

- (i) it contains one of the models can, could, will, would, (and sometimes going to);
- (ii) if the subject of the clause is also the addressee;
- (iii) the predicate describes an action which is physically possible at the time of utterance.

#### Rule 2

Any declarative or interrogative is to be interpreted as a command to stop if it refers to an action or activity which is proscribed at the time of the utterance.

### Rule 3

Any declarative or interrogative is to be interpreted as a command to do if it refers to an action or activity which teacher and pupil(s) know ought to have been performed or completed and hasn't been. (ibid. 109-110)

However, the Birmingham group's analysis of the production and interpretation of speech acts does not simply involve the proposal that these activities are governed by sets of rules. For they further propose that the 'discursive value' of a linguistic item "depends also on what linguistic items have preceded it, what are expected to follow and what do follow" (ibid. 111). So, for example, it is suggested that, upon either making a mistake or realising that they have not expressed themselves clearly enough, teachers often follow one potential initiating move with another, signalling (via intonation, etc.) that they now consider the first one a 'starter' and that the pupils were not expected to respond to it. According to Coulthard, a case in point is the following:

(3) (Coulthard, 1977: 112)

Teacher:      What about this one? This I think is a super one.  
                 Isobel, can you think what it means?  
Pupil:        Does it mean there's been an accident further  
                 along the road?

Thus Coulthard describes the teacher's contribution to this sequences in the following terms:

The teacher begins with a question which appears to have been intended as an elicitation. She changes her mind and relegates it to a starter. The following statement is in turn relegated by a second question which then does stand as an elicitation. (ibid: 113)



In sum, then, in their analyses of exchange structure, the Birmingham discourse analysts assume that the 'discursive status' of the moves which purportedly comprise exchanges can be accounted for in terms of rules of production and interpretation and the syntagmatic patterns of discourse.<sup>14</sup>

In this section we have presented a straightforward outline of the methods and theoretical tools of discourse analysis. We now turn to consider some of the many deficiencies of this approach and in so doing, take Levinson (1979, 1981a, 1981b, 1983) - who has produced a series of powerful critiques of the discourse analytic programme of research - as our guide.

### 3.3.2 The Essential Inadequacies of Discourse Analysis

Levinson's critique of discourse analysis takes the form of an attack on its four most fundamental assumptions. These assumptions - the first three of which it may be noted also underpin speech act theory - are formulated by Levinson as follows:

- (i) There are unit acts - speech acts or moves - that are performed in speaking, which belong to a specifiable, delimited set.
- (ii) Utterances are segmentable into unit parts - utterance-units - each of which corresponds to (at least) one unit act.
- (iii) There is a specifiable function, and hopefully a procedure, that will map utterance units into speech acts and vice versa.
- (iv) Conversational sequences are primarily regulated by a set of sequencing rules stated over speech act (or move) types.

(Levinson, 1983: 289)

Let us now briefly consider the objections that Levinson raises against each of these tenets.

Assumption (1): There are unit acts - speech acts or moves - that are performed in speaking, which belong to a specifiable, delimited set.

Levinson points to two problems with assumption (i). The first of these is that utterances often perform "two or more speech acts simultaneously without one act being attributable to one utterance-part and another to another part" (Levinson, 1981a). So, for example, according to Levinson, in (4) A's single-sentence utterance accomplishes both the act of questioning and the act of offering:

(4) (Levinson, 1983: 290)

A: Would you like another drink?  
B: Yes I would, thank you , but make it a small one.

while in (5) B's single-sentence utterance simultaneously answers A's question and requests something of him:

(5) (Levinson, 1981a: 99)

A: What do you need?  
B: Four at thirty three.  
A: Okay, will do.

As regards the implications of such multiple functions, Levinson asserts that although they

are not in principle problematic for assumptions (i) and (iii), (...) as they accumulate they do render the whole model considerably less attractive. How, for example, are the sequencing rules in (iv) to operate if more acts are being done than can feasibly be responded to directly? Moreover, as we shall see, the sources for multiple functions often lie outside the utterance in question, in the sequential environment in which it occurs; but such environments are not obviously restricted in kind, so that the existence of a well-defined and delimited set of speech act types, as required by the model, is quite dubious. (Levinson, 1983: 290)

The second and, in Levinson's view, more fundamental problem with assumption (i) concerns the fact that utterances often reference a chain of perlocutionary intents. The point here, and it is a crucial one, is that since an array of intents and motives may lie behind the production of an utterance, an array of alternative functions may correspondingly be attributable to it.<sup>15</sup> To illustrate this point Levinson provides the following scenerio:

I'm not enjoying the party that I have gone to with my companion Mildred, so I wish to leave, so I wish to suggest to Mildred that we both go, so I say to her, 'It's getting late, Mildred'. To which Mildred may felicitously reply with any of the following utterances (inter alia):

- A: It's only 11:15 darling.
- B: Let's stay 'till Tony goes.
- C: Do you want to go?
- D: Aren't you enjoying yourself dear?

where only the first one seems to respond directly to what is said. The others seem to respond to higher levels in the hierarchical chain of motives that led me to say 'It's getting late, Mildred'. Thus B. is addressed to my desire that we both go, C. to my desire that I go, and D. to my ultimate motivate in saying what I did. (Levinson, 1981a: 100)

Speech acts then are not, as the discourse analysts assume,

unitary assignments to utterances from a well-defined set of speech act types, but rather an n-ary assignment of intents, where these are linked in specific ways, from an indefinitely large set of possible perlocutionary intents. (ibid: 103)

So much for assumption (i).

Assumption (ii): Utterances are segmentable into unit parts - utterance-units - each of which corresponds to (at least) one unit act.

According to Levinson, there are also serious problems with the assumption that there is an independently specifiable set of utterance-units to which speech acts or moves can be assigned. Single sentences, he notes, "can be used to perform two or more speech acts in different clauses, and each clause (as we have seen) may perform more than one speech act" (Levinson, 1983: 291). Further, actions may be performed (a) through utterances comprising any of a range of sub-sentential units, (b) through an array of non-linguistic vocalisations and non-verbal actions, as well as (c) through "sheer silence" (ibid.) - a child's silence following a question/reprimand such as that which follows, Levinson notes, for example, would be likely to be heard as an affirmative response:

(6) (Levinson, 1981a: 102)

Teacher: Johnny, did you smear Susie's face with the paint?

In disposing of assumption (ii), then, Levinson concludes that:

it is impossible to specify in advance what kinds of behavioural units will carry major interactional acts; rather the units in question seem to be functionally defined by the actions they can be seen to perform in context. (ibid.)

We come now to assumption (iii).

Assumption (iii): There is a specifiable function, and hopefully a procedure, that will map utterance-units into speech acts and vice versa.

Given that there is neither a well-defined set of speech act types (as proposed in assumption (i)) nor a well-defined, independently specifiable set of relevant utterance units to which such speech act types can be assigned (as proposed in assumption (ii)), it follows that assumption (iii) is also problematic. However, as Levinson notes, even if it were somehow possible to overcome these difficulties, assumption (iii) would still have to be rejected in the face of yet further problems, the most damaging of which is that the theories which have been developed within speech act theory in order to account for the phenomenon of indirection in human communication turn out to be fundamentally misconceived.

In casting these theories aside, Levinson begins by countering those theories, like Searle's, which are based on the contention that indirect speech acts involve the performing of both a secondary (literal) and a primary (non-literal) illocutionary act. This he does by drawing our attention to the occurrence of cases such as (7) in which an utterance clearly does not continue to perform the action that is derivable from its illocutionary force indicators.

(7) (Levinson, 1981a: 104)

A: May I remind you that your account is overdue.

As Levinson states, this sentence

cannot possibly actually function as a request for permission to remind, since the reminding is done in the uttering of the sentence without such permission being granted. (Levinson, 1981a: 104)

In turn, Levinson is equally unimpressed with the proposals of those, like the discourse analysts, who adhere to the 'force conversion' rule hypothesis. Thus he argues that, while such a solution to the 'problem' of indirect speech acts may appear to deal adequately with some cases, "it is only at best partial" (ibid. 105). In order that he might illustrate this, he asks us to consider (8),

(8) (Levinson, 1981a: 105)

A: I could eat the whole of that cake.

B: Thanks. It's quite easy to make actually.

about which he has the following to say:

Here B (correctly) interpreted A's remark as a compliment (as shown by the response 'thanks') on the cake that she had baked. But clearly there is no general rule of the sort that to say one could eat or do X counts as a compliment on X. Inferences of this kind depend on specific aspects of the context: ((8)) was said at a birthday party where the host had baked her own cake. There must of course be principles that underlie our understandings of such things, but if modelling conversation is to be a finite enterprise they had better be a small but powerful set of general principles of inference to interlocutor's communicative intents in specific contexts, rather than members of a huge and ad hoc set of conventional rules. (ibid: 105-106).

In conclusion, the mechanisms through which actions are assigned to utterances are not, as the discourse analysts maintain, simply a "set of conventional rules of production and interpretation. Rather, they are a powerful and complex set of inference principles" (ibid.) which, anticipating somewhat, turn out to operate primarily in terms of

considerations that have to do with the sequential organisation(s) of talk. Accordingly, even if we ignore the problems associated with assumptions (i) and (ii), the third assumption of discourse analytic research still proves to be fundamentally misconceived.

Assumption (iv): Conversational sequences are primarily regulated by a set of sequencing rules stated over speech act (or move) types.

The central purpose in analysing naturally occurring talk is to give an account of how its orderliness or coherence is produced and understood. As noted, in the case of the discourse analysts this involves the explication of rules which purportedly govern the order in which speech act (or related) categories can properly occur. Thus, it is proposed that it is possible to specify sequencing rules which will (a) predict what will count as an orderly or appropriate response to any given utterance/action and thus (b) delimit between well-formed and ill-formed sequences of spoken interaction.

In turning to reject this rule-based approach to sequencing constraints, Levinson, drawing on his observations concerning assumptions (i) to (iii), introduces a number of counter-examples. One of these is (9):

(9) (Levinson, 1981a: 110)

A: Is John there?

B: You can reach him at extention thirty-four sixty-two.

where, as Levinson observes,

B's response is not an answer, and yet constitutes an eminently cooperative response on the understanding that the motive behind A's question is A's wanting to get in touch with John. (ibid: 110)

Another of Levinson's counter-examples to the discourse analytic approach is (10)

(10) (Levinson, 1981a: 111)

A: What's the metric torque-wrench nipple-extractor look like?  
B: It's on the bench in front of you.

where once again B furnishes a cooperative and coherent response

but only on the assumption that the reason for A's question is that he wishes to find the wrench and that B reckons that a statement of its location will serve A's purpose better than a description of the instrument itself. (ibid: 111)

The point that Levinson wishes to illustrate through the introduction of cases such as these is simply this: One cannot predict, via the formulation of sequencing rules of a quasi-syntactic character, what will count as an appropriate response to a certain kind of utterance/action (e.g., a question), because this matter will be determined by the intents and motives which lie behind the production of that utterance/action on any given occasion.<sup>16</sup> The assumption that sequencing rules, stated over speech act categories, govern the sequential organisation of talk is thus rejected along with assumptions (i)-(iii); and Levinson's critique of the central tenets of discourse analysis is complete.

In concluding this consideration of discourse analysis, we may sum up with two general points which in addition to emphasising its



inappropriateness will point in a preliminary way to how conversation analysis differs from it. First, in contrast to conversation analysis, discourse analysis presumes a kind of Chomskyian notion of the speaker and hearer, in which information is simply transferred from one brain to another. As such the model takes no account of the fact that intersubjective understanding is (i) the product of active management in the process of interaction, (ii) incarnately built into sequences, and (iii) the object of explicit repair mechanisms.

Second, and again in contrast to conversation analysis, discourse analytic research has been primarily focussed on interaction in institutional settings which can be held to be driven by interactional 'scripts'. As a result, the analysis of the motivations of utterances has been largely taken as given by the institutional context of the interaction. And this has inevitably seriously limited the extent to which they have felt required to handle the illocutionary and perlocutionary forces of utterances, both of which are central, especially in 'looser interactional contexts', to the analysis of the development of sequential trajectories.

### 3.4 Conversation Analysis<sup>17</sup>

Pioneered within sociology by Harvey Sacks in conjunction with his collaborators, Emanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson, conversation analysis has evolved over the past fifteen years into a prominent aspect of the programme of ethnomethodology - the study of the competences which underlie intelligible, socially organised interaction. Like discourse analysis, conversation analysis is centrally concerned with describing and analysing the ways in which co-ordinated conduct is managed in an

orderly fashion. In contrast to discourse analytic research, however, it does not (1) work with a concept of well-formed discourse (constructed, for example, as a product of situationally invariant rules), nor (2) propose to treat the production, interpretation and sequential organisation of talk as processes which are independent of one another. Rather, in line with other forms of ethnomethodological research, it assumes that the activities of producing, interpreting and dealing with conduct "are accomplished as the accountable products of common sets of procedures" (Heritage and Atkinson, 1984: 1).

From the outset, conversation analysts - working within the constraints of the ethnomethodological programme - have pursued a rigorously empirical approach to the analysis of social interaction. As a result, they have avoided premature formalisation and concerned themselves instead with the task of explicating the *procedures, rules and* expectations which participants actually orient to and use in producing their own behaviour and interpreting and dealing with the behaviour of others. This research orientation has led to the development of an analytical framework which, in contrast to the systems of analysis used by the discourse analysts, recognises and accommodates the fact that any given utterance may index a variety of intents and accomplish a range of activities which a recipient, subject only to the possibility that his interpretation may be subsequently corrected, may address or ignore.

The central tenet of the conversation analytic research tradition is that utterances are understood by reference to their structural location. Accordingly, conversation analysis is primarily concerned with examining the format and positioning of turns within sequences. That is to say, it aims to analyse social interaction in terms of the ways in which

utterances are produced with regard to, and interpreted on the basis of, sequential considerations.

The procedures of analysis which the practitioners of conversation analysis employ in pursuing this interest in the turn-with-sequence character of utterances are, crucially, based on the recognition that typically a turn's talk will display (indirectly) some analysis, understanding or appreciation of the turn (or series of turns) which precedes it: a phenomenon which is straightforwardly illustrated in (11) where the second speaker displays an understanding of A's utterance as an invitation (rather than, for example, a question or a complaint) by producing an 'acceptance' (rather than, for example, an answer or an apology or excuse) in the next turn:

(11) (SBL: 10: 12)

B: Why don't you come and see me some <sup>times</sup>  
A: → [I would like to.

The methodological significance of such displays of understanding is summarised by Sacks et al as follows:

while understandings of other turns' talk are displayed to co-participants, they are available as well to professional analysts who are thereby afforded a proof criterion (and search procedure) for the analysis of what a turn's talk is occupied with. Since it is the parties' understandings of prior turns' talk that is relevant to their construction of next turns, it is their understandings that are wanted for analysis. The display of those understandings in the talk of subsequent turns afford both a resource for the analysis of prior turns and a proof procedure for professional analyses of prior turns - resources intrinsic to the data themselves. (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974: 729)

Thus, in attempting to explicate the procedures, rules and expectations that participants employ in producing their own conduct and interpreting

the conduct of others, conversation analysts treat their publically displayed understandings and treatments of prior talk as the central resource out of which analysis may be developed.

In what follows, we will briefly illustrate the approach of conversation analysis by discussing adjacency pairs, preference organisation and pre-sequences, all of which will figure in the analyses of news interview interaction in Chapters 4-6. Given that the central object of study in conversation analytic research is mundane conversation - the prototypical form of language use, we will then conclude the chapter with some observations concerning the application of the techniques of this research tradition to institutional data.

#### 3.4.1 Adjacency Pairs

A major class of sequences which has been investigated in conversation analytic work is a set of two-utterance sequences termed adjacency pairs - examples of which are question-answer, greeting-greeting, invitation-acceptance/refusal and request-grant/rejection. As defined by Schegloff and Sacks (1973: 295-296), adjacency pairs are sequences of two utterances that are:

- (i) adjacent,
  - (ii) produced by different speakers,
  - (iii) ordered as a first part and a second part, and
  - (iv) typed, so that a first part requires a particular second part (or range of second parts).
- (Heritage, 1984a: 246)

Moreover, their operation is informed by a simple rule, which Schegloff and Sacks formulate thus:

given the recognisable production of a first pair part, on its first completion its speaker should stop and a next speaker should start and produce a second pair part from the pair type the first pair part is recognisably a member of. (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973: 296)

To avoid any confusion, it should be stressed immediately that this rule of adjacency pair operation is "not intended as a regulative or explanatory rule in terms of which we may account for behaviour" (Drew, 1978: 5). That this is so is made clear by the fact that the constraint that a second pair part is due upon completion of a first pair part is described, within conversation analytic research, as the conditional relevance (Schegloff, 1968) of a second action upon a first. For, as the following quote from Schegloff illustrates, the notion of conditional relevance references not, for example, a constraint of the sort that an utterance which follows a first pair part must be a second pair part if it is to count as well-formed discourse, but rather a normatively organised constraint which provides for the absence of a second pair part being accountably noticeable:

When one utterance (A) is conditionally relevant on another (S), then the occurrence of S provides for the relevance of the occurrence of A. If A occurs, it occurs (i.e. is produced and heard) as 'responsive to' S, i.e. in a serial or sequenced relation to it; and, if it does not occur, its non-occurrence is an event, i.e. it is not only non-occurring (as is each member of an indefinitely extendable list of possible occurrences), it is absent, or 'officially' or 'notably' absent. That it is an event can be seen not only from its 'noticeability', but from its use as legitimate and recognisable grounds for a set of inferences (e.g. about the participant who failed to produce it). (Schegloff, 1972: 76)

In addition to pointing to the fact that it is intuitively the case that we construct inferences "about motives, intentions, beliefs, etc. (e.g. the other intended to be insulting, or the other wouldn't answer

the question, or couldn't do so without self-incrimination) ...when second pair parts are not forthcoming" (Heritage, 1984a: 247), conversation analysts draw attention to several kinds of evidence for the proposal that speakers orient to the conditional relevance of a second pair part following the production of a first. Thus one type of evidence is that, in the event of their first pair parts failing to elicit a response, speakers often propose that a second pair part is accountably due, and hence noticeably absent, through the production of repeats of their original utterances. This is the case, for example, in (12) and (13) where, in the absence of response to an initial question, A and Ch respectively repeat and then, in the further absence of response, re-repeat the question in truncated form (the re-repeat in each instance being successful in eliciting the looked-for answer).

(12) (Atkinson and Drew, 1979: 52)

A: Is there something bothering you or not?  
(1.0)  
A: → Yes or no  
(1.5)  
A: → Eh?  
B: No

(13) (Atkinson and Drew, 1979: 52)

Ch: Have to cut these Mummy  
(1.3)  
Ch:→ Won't we Mummy  
(1.5)  
Ch:→ Won't we  
M: Yes

Another type of evidence for the normative character of adjacency pairs is that the absence of the second part of a pair is a matter about

which complaints are regularly made. Thus, for example, as Atkinson and Drew (1979: 54-55) observe, the arrowed utterances in the following extracts can all be heard as complaints of a kind about the failure of interlocutors to answer questions:

(14) (Atkinson and Drew, 1979: 54)

- A: What did you think (then (.) Pete?  
(5.7)  
A: Eh  
(16.5)  
B:→ Don't all shout at once

(15) (Atkinson and Drew, 1979: 54)

(A's initial question in this extract is addressed to the 'Dave' named in C's utterance, and in B's enquiry)

- A: So you:re just being awkward for the sake of it  
(1.8)  
A: Why're you being awkward then?  
(1.8)  
A: Eh  
(8.4)  
C:→ You know summat Dave, the other day when I was (.) saying  
and I was asking a question to everybody and you butted in  
before I asked you and you sais oh you never ask me  
anything. And when I do ask you, you don't say nowt  
(2.5)  
B:→ Are you listening Dave?  
D: Yeah

A third type of evidence is that the non-producers of second pair parts themselves frequently attend to the normative accountability of the adjacency pair structure. So, for example, although the questions in (16) and (17) are not answered, they are responded to, with the second speaker in each case offering an account for the non-production of an answer.

(16) (Heritage, 1984a: 249)

M: What happened at (.) wo:rk. At Bullock's this evening. =  
P:→ .hhhh Well I don't know:::w::.

(17) (Heritage, 1984: 250)

J: But the train goes. Does th' train go o:n th' bo:t?  
M:→ .hh Ooh I've no idea:. She ha:sn't sai:d.

A fourth and, for our purposes final, type of evidence for the normative character of the adjacency pair structure is that commonly, although a second pair part is not produced adjacent to a first, the expectation that it will ultimately be issued is collaboratively maintained across an 'insertion sequence' which is initiated through the production of a question. A case in point is the following:

(18) (Schegloff, 1972: 78)

A: Are you coming tonight?  
B: Can I bring a guest?  
A: Sure.  
B: I'll be there.

Thus here, as Heritage notes,

A does not treat B's first response as inappropriate or as designed to avoid answering (analyses which A could have displayed by, for example, repeating the initial question or challenging B's response). In this context it can be noticed that B's utterance, while not answering the question, does display an analysable relatedness to it and that it is this relatedness which provides its warrant to occur where it does. Furthermore we can see that A, in answering B's question, effectively acknowledges this relatedness. Finally, the completion of A's answer ('sure') provides a further opportunity for B to answer A's original question. Thus although strict adjacency is not achieved between A's initial question (line 1) and B's answer (line 4), the entire sequence nonetheless proceeds under the continuously sustained



expectation that A's first pair part will ultimately receive its looked-for second. (Heritage, 1984a: 251)

In this discussion of adjacency pairs we have shown that upon the production of the first part of such a pair, the second part is conditionally relevant; its absence thus being a noticeable and inferentially implicative event.<sup>18</sup> We will now develop this analysis by briefly considering the concept of preference and the notion of pre-sequences.

### 3.4.2 Preference Organisation and Pre-Sequences

Any collection of the many adjacency pairs that have alternative second pair parts will reveal that their alternative second actions are characteristically accomplished in different ways. Thus, by way of illustration, in the context of invitations, requests, offers and the like, we find that while most acceptances are performed (1) directly and (2) without delay - as in the case of A's acceptance of B's invitation in (11):

(11) (SBL: 10: 12)

B: Why don't you come and see me some times  
A: → I would like to.

rejections normally exhibit at least some of the ensuing features (Levinson, 1983: 334-335; Heritage, 1984a: 266-267):

- (1) Delays: (i) by pause before delivery, (ii) the use of a preface (see (2)), (iii) by displacement over a number of turns via the use of insertion sequences.
- (2) Prefaces: (i) the use of markers like 'uh' or 'well', (ii) the use of token agreements,, appreciations and apologies, (iii) the use of qualifiers and (iv) hesitation.

- (3) Accounts: explanations for why the invitation/request/offer is not being accepted.
- (4) Declination component: which is normally mitigated, qualified or indirect.

So, for example, it may be noticed that the refusal of the invitation in the extract below is delayed within the turn in which it is accomplished by a short outbreath, the turn component 'well', and an appreciation (arrow 1). Moreover it is mitigated by the inclusion of 'I don't think' (arrow 2), and is subsequently accounted for (arrow 3).

(19) (SBL: 10: 14)

- B: Uh if you'd care to come over and visit a little while this morning I'll give you a cup of coffee.
- A:1→ hehh Well that's awfully sweet of you,  
2→ I don't think I can make it this morning  
3→ .hh uhm I'm running an ad in the paper and- and uh I have to stay near the phone.

Within conversation analysis these basic differences are described in terms of the concept of 'preference', with actions that are typically performed in an unvarnished form and without delay being termed 'preferred' actions, and those which are delayed, mitigated and accounted for being termed 'dispreferred' actions. As regards this, two points need to be made before we proceed. First, the term 'preference' is not in any way intended to refer to speakers' personal desires or psychological proclivities. Rather it is used to reference institutionalised features of the turn and sequence structures in which non-equivalent alternative activities are customarily packaged. Second, preference considerations extended beyond the confines of adjacency pairs. Thus, apart from informing the organisation of a range of alternative second pair parts, they also inform the organisation of such

non-equivalent alternative actions as agreements and disagreements (Pomerantz, 1975, 1978, 1984b).

Research into preference organisation in relation to a wide range of conversational activities has shown, amongst other things, how just as the 'early' production of preferred actions (which are normally affiliative) maximises the likelihood of their occurrence, so the systematically delayed production of dispreferred actions (which are normally disaffiliative) minimises the likelihood of their occurrence (see, for example, Davidson, 1984, forthcoming; Heritage, 1984a; Pomerantz, 1984b). In summary, this is so because, given their association with dispreferreds, speakers may (1) analyse such features as pauses and 'uh' or 'well' as instances of an as-yet-unstated-dispreferred and (2), having done so, seek to forestall its anticipated production by modifying or revising their original utterances so as to make them more attractive, acceptable or appropriate. A clear illustration of this 'forestalling' procedure is observable (20), with the speaker modifying his invitation/offer upon the occurrence of no immediately forthcoming talk from its recipient.

(20) (Davidson, 1984: 105)

A: C'mon down he:re, = it's oka:y,  
(0.2)

A:→ I got lotta stuff, = I got be:er en stuff'n

This analysis can be extended by observing that dispreferreds are also regularly forestalled through the use of pre-sequence objects which are "directed at establishing the appropriateness or relevance of projectedly subsequent actions" (Heritage, 1985b: 4). For example, consider the cases that follow:

(21) (Atkinson and Drew, 1979: 253)

A: → Whatcha doin'?

B: Nothin'

A: Wanna drink?

(22) (Atkinson and Drew, 1979: 143)

C: How ya doin' =

→ = say what'r you doing?

R: Well we're going out. Why?

C: Oh, I was just gonna say come out and come over here  
and talk this evening, but if you're going out you can't  
very well do that

In each of these cases the initial utterances are transparently preliminaries directed at establishing the appropriateness of a projected invitation (or request). Moreover, in each case the second speaker clearly attends to them as such. Thus in (21) B's "*nothing*" is *hearable* not as a literal answer to A's enquiry, but rather a giving a 'go ahead' for the production of the talk that it pre-figures. Similarly in (22) R, in requesting that C detail the motive he had in producing his question, plainly displays that he is attending to it's prefatory character.

Pre-sequence objects such as these, which are concerned with establishing whether an invitation or request would be appropriate, possible or desired are extremely common. In some cases, as in (21) and (22), they do not give a clear indication of whether it is an invitation or a request that they are preliminary to; in others, by contrast, they transparently project one or other of these actions - as in (23) which is unequivocally analysable as a pre-request.

(23) (Merritt, 1976: 337)

C: → Do you have the blackberry jam?  
S: Yes  
C: Okay. Can I have half a pint then?  
S: Sure ((turns to get))

Irrespective of this, however, they constitute a means through which rejections can be avoided. For, as is to be seen in (22), they provide the projected recipient of an invitation/request with an opportunity to indicate in advance of its actualisation that it is not desired or appropriate etc. Thus, the pre-sequence - which, it should be noted, can be similarly used across a variety of contexts - constitutes a further device through which the performance of dispreferred actions is systematically avoided in interaction.

In concluding this section, it is worth mentioning that the analysis of pre-sequences provides the basis for a new and powerful account of indirect speech acts. Thus, developing on work by Goffman (1976), Schegloff (1977b; 1979a) and Heritage (1980), as well as on that by Merritt (1976), Heringer (1977) and Coulthard (1977), Levinson (1983) proposes that these phenomena are a product of the collapsing of four-part sequences in which the initial turns transparently pre-figure the actions that are performed in the third turns. In order to illustrate this, moreover, he constructs a detailed analysis of pre-requests - which, as has been seen, have attracted a good deal of attention within both speech act theory and discourse analytic research.

Very briefly, then, Levinson, suggests that 'so-called' indirect requests result from the collapsing of the following four-part structure, in which the pre-sequence object in position 1 turn is plainly a preliminary to the request in position 3 turn:

(24) (Levinson, 1983: 357)

Position 1:	A: Hi. Do you have uh size C flashlight batteries?	((PRE-REQUEST))
Position 2:	B: Yes sir	((GO AHEAD))
Position 3:	A: I'll have four please	((REQUEST))
Position 4:	B: ((turns to get))	((RESPONSE))

Thus, having noted that recipients may respond to transparent pre-requests by producing an offer (as opposed to a go ahead) in turn 2,

(25) (Merritt, 1976: 324)

C:	Do you have pecan Danish today?
S:→	Yes we do. Would you like one of those?
C:	Yes please
S:	Okay ((turns to get))

Levinson further notes that they may on occasion go a stage further and actually respond to the 'anticipated' request by granting (or rejecting) it. In other words, the four-part sequence illustrated in (24) may be collapsed into the following two-part sequence:

(26) (Levinson, 1983: 361)

Position 1:	S: Have you got Embassy Gold please?	((PRE-REQUEST))
Position 2:	H: Yes dear ((provides))	((RESPONSE to non-overt request))

In developing on this, Levinson then observes that in the vast majority of cases of such two-part sequences, the process of 'ellipses' is in fact aimed at by the producers of the pre-requests. And, he suggests that one of the central ways in which they do this is through the inclusion in turn 1 of the information that is necessary for the

request in question to be complied with.<sup>19</sup> So, for example, in (27) S's position 1 turn transparently pre-figures a request for glue. However, it does not specify how much glue is required and, as such, compliance/refusal is not possible in the next turn.

(27) (Levinson, 1983: 362)

Position 1:     S: Do you have any glue?  
                  H: Yes. What kind do you want dear?...

However, by contrast, in the following collapsed two-part sequence, S's position 1 turn makes compliance (refusal) possible due to its provision of a full specification of the relevant information.

(28) (Levinson, 1983: 362)

Position 1:     S: Can I have two pints of Abbot and  
                  a grapefruit and whisky?  
Position 4:     H: Sure ((turns to get))

Thus, generalising the argument, Levinson concludes that

so-called indirect speech acts are position 1 turns - pre-requests - formulated so as to expect position 4 responses in second turn. Questions about whether they have 'literal' or 'indirect' (or both) forces or meanings simply do not, on this view, arise. Such position 1 turns mean whatever they mean; that they can be formulated so as to project certain conversational trajectories is something properly explored in the sequential analysis of successive utterances.  
(Levinson, 1983: 363)

From a conversation analytic perspective, then, the problem of indirection to which the advocates of speech act theory and discourse analysis devote so much attention is "quite illusory" (ibid. 364). Indeed, the concept of an 'indirect speech act' does not figure in conversation analytic research.

### 3.4.3 Institutional Interaction

Although conversation analysis has always afforded primacy to the study of mundane conversation, in recent years a number of researchers have begun to apply its approach and findings to 'institutional' data. Thus, for example, conversation analytic techniques have been used to analyse interaction in classrooms (e.g., Cuff and Hustler, 1982; French and French, 1984; McHoul, 1978; Mehan, 1978, 1979), courtrooms (e.g., Atkinson, 1979, Atkinson and Drew, 1979; Drew, 1984b, 1985; Maynard, 1982, 1983, 1984; Pomerantz, 1983; Pomerantz and Atkinson, 1984), medical encounters (e.g., Anderson and Sharrock, forthcoming; Bergman 1979; Frankel, forthcoming a, b; Heath, 1981, 1982a, 1982b, 1983, 1984; West, 1983, 1984a, 1984b, 1985), meetings (Cuff et al., 1978; Cuff and Sharrock, 1985), news interviews (Heritage, 1978; 1985a), and *police* interrogations (Watson, 1983, forthcoming a, B). As a preliminary to the conversation analytic chapters that follow, it will be useful to draw attention to two aspects of this type of research into institutional interaction.

First, this work proceeds on the assumption that, as the primary form of language usage, mundane conversation occupies a 'foundational' status in relation to other forms of talk. Accordingly, it is generally held that comparative analysis with conversational interaction is essentially if the constraints on the various types of institutional interaction are to be adequately specified. This research orientation, it may be noted, has led to the general finding that conduct in institutional settings (1) involves the use of a restricted range of procedures which have their roots in ordinary conversation, and that (2)



the relevancies and expectations normally associated with these procedures are commonly re-shaped in such 'specialised' contexts.

Second, a central aim in conversation analytic studies of non-conversational interaction is to explicate the ways in which particular institutional contexts are recursively created and maintained in the talk of the participants. As such, social structure is not viewed as somehow independent of actual interaction - that is, as an external resource in terms of which (institutional) talk is produced and understood. Rather, talk and social structure are proposed to be reflexively linked, with social structure comprising both a resource for and product of the interaction of participants. This standpoint, which is a central theme in ethnomethodological work (Heritage, 1984a: 179-232),<sup>20</sup> is summarised by Wilson as follows:

the social world is constituted by *situated actions produced in particular concrete situations*, that are available to the participants for their own recognition, description, and use as warranted grounds for further inference and action on those same occasions as well as subsequent ones. Situated actions are produced through context-free, context-sensitive mechanisms of social interaction, and social structure is used by members of society to render their actions in particular situations intelligible and coherent. In this process, social structure is an essential resource for and product of situated action, and social structure is reproduced as an objective reality that partially constrains action. It is through this reflexive relation between social structure and situated action that the transparency of displays [the mutual intelligibility of conduct] is accomplished by exploiting the context-dependence of meaning. (Wilson, 1983: 20)

We may, then, point to two general concerns in conversation analytic studies of institutional settings: (1) to identify the ways in which various forms of institutional interaction exhibit systematic differences from ordinary conversation; and (2) to, relatedly, explicate the ways in which particular institutional contexts are produced and reproduced on a

turn-by-turn basis. Both of these themes underpin the analytical chapters that follow.

Footnotes to Chapter Three

1. Austin began to develop his response to the logical positivists towards the end of the 1930s when logical positivism had been influential for almost two decades.
2. As Sinclair and Coulthard note, "Austin's work stems from an argument that various philosophical problems have been misformulated on the assumption that certain utterances are statements when in fact they are performing an action, e.g., promising" (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975: 13).
3. See Austin (1962: 3) as regards to why he prefers the term constative to that of statement.
4. The criteria should, of course, also serve to differentiate the pure performative from those unequivocally constative utterances which have the same form.
5. Though one can be 'willing to say I am sorry'.
6. Searle stresses that "not all illocutionary acts have a propositional content, for example, an utterance of "Hurrah" does not, nor does "Ouch"" (ibid. 30).
7. Searle notes, however, that these two elements cannot always be distinguished from one another in the surface structure of a sentence.
8. That is to say, he also ignores "promises made by elliptical turns of phrase, hints, metaphors, etc." (ibid. 55-56).
9. That is, the force derivable from its function-indicating device(s).
10. Searle states that: "The first is established by the principles of conversation operating on the information of the hearer and the speaker, and the second is derived from the theory of speech acts together with background information" (ibid. 74).
11. In support of this proposal, he provides a similar analysis of another class of indirect speech acts, namely commissives. See Searle (ibid. 79-82).
12. According to Coulthard (1977: 27), "the first attempt to incorporate 'speech acts' into linguistic theory was by Boyd and Thorne (1969)".
13. The settings studied by the Birmingham group include classroom interaction (Sinclair et al., 1972; Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975), broadcast interviews (Pearce, 1973), and Doctor-Patient interviews (Coulthard and Ashby, 1976).

14. These two domains, it may be noted, are generally dealt with under the headings of 'situation' and 'tactics' respectively (Coulthard, 1977: 107).
15. In other words, an utterance may be open to a range of interpretations, each based on different inferences as to its perlocutions.
16. For further problems with the discourse analysts' rule-based approach to sequencing, see Levinson (1981a: 107-110; 1983: 292-294).
17. For published summary outlines of the conversation analytic perspective, see Atkinson and Drew (1979: 34-81), Heritage (1984a: 233-292, 1985b), Heritage and Atkinson (1984); Levinson (1983: 284-370), West and Zimmerman (1982).
18. For more detailed considerations of the adjacency pair concept, see Schegloff and Sacks (1973), Atkinson and Drew (1979) and Heritage (1984a).
19. Another of the ways in which speakers aim for the collapse of the four part sequence is, according to Levinson, through the inclusion of such markers as 'would', 'could', 'please' etc..
20. See also Giddens's (1979, 1984) theory of structuration.

## Chapter Four

### THE ORGANISATION OF TURN-TAKING IN NEWS INTERVIEWS

#### 4.1 Introduction

The organisation of turn-taking is of central importance to the analysis of institutionalised interaction. For institutional settings involve the use of turn-taking systems which in various ways differ from the one used in and for ordinary conversation. And these differences, as Schegloff observes, can have important consequences not only for the organisation of sequences, but also for 'the substance of what gets talked about and how' (Schegloff, forthcoming).

In this chapter, we describe the British news interview turn-taking system and consider some aspects of its operation. In so doing, we propose that (1) this turn-taking system operates through a simple form of turn-type pre-allocation; that (2) a substantial number of the systematic differences between news interviews and conversational interaction are a product of these constraints on the production of types of turns; and that (3) the character of this form of turn-taking is linked to the legal restrictions on broadcast journalism in the United Kingdom.

#### 4.2 The Comparative Analysis of Turn-Taking Systems

It is now widely accepted that the turn-taking systems used in institutional contexts are the product of transformations of the one used for mundane conversation.<sup>1</sup> Before proceeding to consider the organisation of turn-taking in news interviews, we will therefore provide a brief outline of the turn-taking system for conversation and identify

some of the basic ways in which other turn-taking systems have been proposed to differ from it.

While there are several models of the conversational turn-taking system in circulation (see, e.g. Jaffe and Feldstein, 1970; Duncan, 1974), the model formulated by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) is generally considered to be the most powerful and thorough of those to hand (see, e.g., Goodwin, 1979, 1981; Levinson, 1983). This model consists of a turn-constructive component, a turn-allocational component, and a set of rules.

The model's turn-constructive component describes the units that can be used in the construction of a turn, and specifies that turn-transitions become relevant at their completions. Hence, the relevance of turn-transition arises initially at the first possible completion of a first such unit, and (in the event of transfer not being effected at this place) again at each subsequent possible unit completion point (Sacks et al., 1974: 703). A crucial property of turn-constructive units (which range from single words to sentences) is that once they are underway they provide for projections of their types and completions. Thus, by virtue of this property, speakers are provided with resources which enable them to anticipate the point in any current speaker's turn at which transfer of speakership will next become relevant (Sacks et al., 1974: 702-3).

The model's turn-allocational component provides the turn-allocational techniques which may be used to effect turn-transitions. These techniques fall into two groups: (1) those which involve the allocation of a next turn through a current speaker selecting next

speaker; and (2) those which involve the allocation of a next turn through self-selection.

The set of rules which complete the model operate on a turn-by-turn basis to provide for the organisation of talk into single speaker turns, and for the management of recurring transfer of speakership with a minimum of gap and overlap. These rules have been most succinctly summarised by Goodwin (1981: 21):

(Rule-set 1a-c), operating at an initial transition-relevance place, provides for three possibilities: (a) that if a "current-speaker selects next" allocation technique is used, then transfer to the party so selected occurs; (b) that if such an allocation technique has not been used, then self-selection is permitted, but not required, at this place; and (c) that if another does not self-select, then current speaker may, but need not, continue. Rule 2 provides that, in those cases where current speaker continues into a new turn-constructional unit, the rule set reapplies at the next transition-relevance place and others that follow it until transfer to a new speaker occurs.

In the context of this paper, the crucial point to take note of with respect to the turn-taking system for mundane conversation is that it operates on a local turn-by-turn basis, leaving such matters as the ordering, size, and content of turns at talk to be determined interactionally during the course of any given encounter. It is, in other words, a local management system which is administered interactionally by the parties to the talk (Sacks et al., 1974: 724-7). The significance of this observation, in relation to our current concerns, is that non-conversational turn-taking systems (or at least those which organise talk into single speaker turns) are variously shaped so as to specifically not provide for the organisation of turn-taking being managed on a (wholly) local, turn-by-turn basis (Sacks et al.,

1974: 729). That is to say, they are designed to specify in advance some or all of the features which the conversational system allows to vary.

Thus Sacks et al. (1974: 729-31) have proposed that forms of talk can be arrayed along a continuum in terms of the structures of their turn-taking systems. At one end of this continuum is mundane conversation with its locally managed system of turn-taking. At the other end are rituals and ceremonies whose turn-taking systems pre-specify not only the order in which turns should be taken, but also most (if not all) of the other important features (e.g. the size and content of turns) which are locally managed in conversation. Ranged between these two poles are a range of social activities whose turn-taking systems operate through 'various mixes of pre-allocational and local allocational means' (Sacks et al., 1974: 729). One example of the latter is a meeting which involves the use of a turn-taking system that pre-allocates some of the turns it organises to a chairperson, while leaving the others to be locally allocated by the chairperson 'via the use of the pre-allocated turns' (Sacks et al., 1974: 729). Another example is courtroom examination in which the turn-taking system pre-allocates question and answer turns to the counsel and witness respectively, but leaves the size and content of those turns to be interactionally managed (Atkinson and Drew, 1979).

In sum, then, it would appear that (1) non-conversational turn-taking systems represent systematic transformations of the turn-taking system for conversation, and that (2) they do so in that they specify in advance some or all of the parameters that that locally managed system allows to vary.



#### 4.3 The Turn-Taking System for British News Interviews

The news interview turn-taking system exhibits a large number of the properties of the corresponding system for conversation. Thus news interview interaction, like mundane conversation, is characterised by

- (1) single speaker turns;
- (2) recurring transfers of speakership;
- (3) the use of 'current speaker selects next' and self-selection turn-allocational techniques;
- (4) the co-ordination of turn-transitions by reference to projectable transition-relevance places;
- (5) the minimisation of gap and overlap;
- (6) varying turn size;
- (7) varying numbers of participants; and
- (8) varying overall length.

Where the turn-taking system employed for the news interview differs from the one used for conversation is in that it places constraints on the turns that it organises by pre-allocating specific types of turn to specific institutional identities. These constraints, which operate with respect to the institutional identities interviewer/interviewee, specify that (i) parties who assume the role of interviewer should produce turns that are at least minimally recognisable as questions, and that (ii) parties who assume the role of interviewee should produce turns that are at least minimally recognisable as answers. Some of the features of news interview interaction which result from an orientation to this form of turn-type pre-allocation can be summarised as follows:

- (1) Interviewers and interviewees systematically confine themselves to producing turns that are at least minimally recognisable as questions and answers respectively.
- (2) In responding to interviewees' answers, interviewers systematically refrain from producing a range of responses that occur routinely in post-answer contexts in conversation.
- (3a) Although interviewers regularly produce statement turn components, these are routinely issued prior to the production of questioning turn components.
- (3b) Interviewees routinely treat interviewers' statement turn components as preliminaries to questioning turn components.
- (4) Interviews are overwhelmingly opened by interviewers.
- (5) The allocation of turns in multi-party interviews is ordinarily managed by interviewers.
- (6) Interviews are customarily closed by interviewers.
- (7) Repairs on breaches in the standard question-answer format are initiated by interviewers.

In examining the organisation of turn-taking in news interviews, we will consider each of these features in turn, and then focus briefly on some aspects of the design of interviewees' answers.

#### 4.3.1 Interviewers and interviewees systematically confine themselves to producing turns that are at least minimally recognisable as questions and answers respectively

Interviewers and interviewees routinely confine themselves to the work of questioning and answering respectively. In some cases, this involves them requesting and supplying information via relatively

straightforward questions and answers: a case in point being the following in which a narrative is elicited step-by-step.

(1) (WAO: 13.3.79)<sup>2</sup>

- Int: What did that mean=moving the patient or bringing a machine, =or what.=
- GC: =This meant u- moving the patient u- about e::r three hundred yards from the intensive care unit (.) to the x-ray department,=the only place where the available facilities (.) er were.=
- Int: =And what happened.
- GC: .h Initially a phone call was made by the ward sister to the: (0.2) portering department .hh asking for help to move this .hh patient because of the (.) equipment attached to him, (0.2) the .hhh and the:y flatly refused to do so: .=.hhh (0.2) Following this e:r they put the phone down,= immediately another phone call was made, (.) same response,=even though it was pointed out that this was an emergency .hhh the:: people concerned .hhh er gave as their reason for not coming the fact that .h x-ray portering is not covered by the emergency .hh er portering service.
- Int: Were these hospital porters or a union officials or what.
- GC: These were hospital porters acting I believe .hh e:r under instructions from...(continues)

In other cases, however, it involves them performing activities other than questioning and answering, but doing so in and through the production of utterances that are also minimally recognisable as instances of the question and answer turn-types which are pre-allocated to them. This practice of doing something more than straightforwardly requesting and furnishing information (which, in the United Kingdom at least, is a characteristic feature of political interviews) is starkly illustrated in the following extract.

(2) (WAO: 13.3.79)

- 1 AS: .hh er The difference is that it's the press that constantly  
 2 call me a Ma:rxist when I do not, (.) and never have (.) er  
 3 er given that description of myself.↑.hh 1-

4 Int: But I've heard you-  
5 I've heard you'd be very happy to: to: er .hhh er describe  
6 yourself as a Marxist. Could it be that with an election in  
7 the offing you're anxious to play down that you're a  
8 Marxist.  
9 AS: [er] Not at all Mister Da:y.=And I:'m (.) sorry to say  
10 I must disagree with you, =you have never heard me describe  
11 myself .hhh er as a Ma:rxist.=I have o:nly bee:n put in the  
12 position o-of answering that question when the specific  
13 point has been put to me: .hhh about whether or not er I  
14 would call myself a Marxist, .hhh or whether or not .h I  
15 subscribe to Marxist economic philosophy.=  
16 Int: =Do you ascri:be to Marxist economic phil:osophy.=  
17 AS: =I would say that there: e:r the: (.) philosophy of Marx as  
18 far as the economics of Britain is concerned is one with  
19 which I find sympathy,=and would support it.=Yes.  
20 (.)  
21 Int: Well that makes you a Marxist doe:sn't it?  
22 AS: [Not nece:ssarily makes me a  
23 Marxist in the descriptive sense, .hhh er in the same way  
24 that you do not describe many Labour Members of Parliament  
25 as Marxist,=and equally .hhh you wouldn't describe many  
26 other people who...(continues)

In his initial turn, the interviewer first counters the interviewee's prior assertion that he has never described himself as a Marxist (lines 4-6), and then, in a subsequent question turn component, offers a possible account of why he may be trying to distance himself from that descriptor (lines 6-8). In next turn, the interviewee responds by rejecting both the account (line 9) and the counter assertion which preceded it (lines 9-15). The interviewer then pursues the matter firstly by soliciting a clarification of the interviewee's position regarding Marxist economic philosophy (line 16), and secondly by using the interviewee's response (lines 17-19) as grounds for proposing that, despite his attempts to distance himself from such a descriptor, he is in fact a Marxist (line 21). Finally, in responding to the latter of the interviewer's utterances, the interviewee once again rejects the implication that he is endeavouring to conceal his true political colours - this time with an appeal to semantics (lines 22+).

In this sequence, then, an interviewer and interviewee conduct what amounts to a disagreement over whether or not the descriptor 'Marxist' is applicable to the latter. In the course of doing so, however, they continue to attend to the news interview as an occasion in which interviewers appropriately ask questions and interviewees appropriately answer them.

It only remains to be added here that the news interview turn-taking system does not specify in advance the kinds of actions which interviewers and interviewees may package in the turn-types that it pre-allocates to them. Thus it specifies only that interviewers and interviewees should, respectively, produce question and answer turns, and is silent with respect to the types of interactional work which may be accomplished in and through such turns.

4.3.2 In responding to interviewees' answers, interviewers systematically refrain from producing a range of responses that occur routinely in post-answer contexts in conversation

In ordinary conversation, questioners typically respond to the informings their questions have elicited with one or more of a range of responsive activities. These activities include: (i) 'oh' receipts which propose a 'change of state' of knowledge or information (Heritage, 1984b);

(3) (Cambell:4:1)

- A: Well lis:ten:, (.) tiz you tidju phone yer vicar ye:t,  
(0.3)  
B: No I aint  
A: (.hhh)  
A: → Oh:

(ii) 'newsmarks' which, as assertions of 'ritualised disbelief', (a) treat a prior turn's talk as 'news', and (b) promote further talk by reference to that 'news' by its deliverer (Jefferson 1981);

(4) (M:CB(b):16:3) .

R: Didjih git mad,  
L: No?  
(0.7)  
R: → Yih didn't  
L: Nope,

and (iii) assessments of a reported state of affairs (Pomerantz 1984).

(5) (NB:1:6:11)

C: How's yer foot  
A: Oh it's healing beautif'ly.  
C: → Goo::d.

However, while these types of responsive activities are routinely produced in post-answer contexts in conversation, they are massively absent from similar environments in news interviews.<sup>3</sup> For, by pre-specifying that interviewers and interviewees should restrict themselves to questioning and answering respectively, the turn-taking system employed in the latter provides for the immediate relevance of a question upon completion of each question-answer sequence. And, in consequence, interviewers ordinarily and properly proceed directly to the task of questioning in these contexts.

This feature of news interview interaction is clearly observable in (1). Thus it may be noticed here that, in spite of the fact that the interviewee's answers constitute components in a step-by-step description of a particularly untoward incident (in which striking hospital porters

allegedly refused to move a critically ill patient), the interviewer does not produce 'oh' receipts and/or newsmarks and/or assessments in his post-answer turns. Rather he immediately proceeds to ask a question.

(1) (WAO:13.3.79) .

Int: What did that mean=moving the patient or bringing a machine,=or what.=

GC: =This meant u- moving the patient u- about e::r three hundred yards from the intensive care unit (.) to the x-ray department,=the only place where the available facilities (.) er were.=

Int: → =And what happened.

GC: .h Initially a phone call was made by the ward sister to the: (0.2) portering department .hh asking for help to move this .hh patient because of the (.) equipment attached to him, (0.2) the .hhh and the:y flaty refused to do so:.=.hhh (0.2) Following this:e:r they put the phone down,=immediately another phone call was made, (.) same response,=e-even though it was pointed out that this was an emergency .hhh the:: people concerned .hhh er gave as their reason for not coming the fact that .h x-ra:y portering is not covered by the emergency .hh er portering service.

Int: → Were these hospital porters or a union officials or what.

GC: These were hospital porters acting I belie:ve .hh e:r under instructions from...(continues)

The news interview turn-taking system, then, severely limits interviewers in how they may appropriately respond to interviewees' answers. For, by requiring that they should manage whatever activities they undertake in and through the production of questions, it makes no provision for the expression of their own reactions via the receipting and/or assessment of prior informings.

With regard to the range of possibilities thus left open to interviewers, it can be noted that Drew (1985) - in analysing chains of question-answer sequences in courtroom interaction - has described how questions may be designed to presuppose the adequacy of preceding

answers, or alternatively to challenge or undermine them. This is considered with respect to news interview materials in the next chapter.

4.3.3a Although interviewers regularly produce statement turn components, these are routinely issued prior to the production of questioning turn components

Interviewers do not always produce turns that are wholly occupied with questioning turn components. However, in the event of their producing statement turn components, they routinely attend to the constraint that they should properly confine themselves to the work of questioning. They do this by designing their turns so that, while they are not wholly occupied with questioning turn components, they are nonetheless, in their entirety, minimally recognisable as questions. Hence interviewers customarily issue statement turn components either prior to the production of tag questions (such as "isn't it?" and "didn't you?") or as question prefaces.

Examples of interviewers producing statement turn components prior to the production of tag questions are observable in (6) and (7). Thus, in these extracts, the interviewers' turns, having reached a first possible completion of an initial turn-constructive unit (1 → ) without their being hearable as possibly completed questions, are subsequently made into questions through the production of tag positioned questioning turn components (2 → ).

(6) (AP:7.3.79)

LL: =And of course u- a large (0.7) proportion of people simply  
don't know it exists.  
Int: .hhh And w- if it does exist it- it exists in rather small  
1 → amounts,



2 → doesn't it.  
(.)

LL: Yes. = Well like the case... (continues)

(7) (WAO:25.1.79)

EM: ...in the end .hh the public will be disaffected. =

Int: =Tha:t's precisely what the Conservative opposition are

1 → saying, =

2 → =isn't it? =

EM: =.hhh I think... (continues)

Examples of interviewers producing statement turn components as question prefaces are located in (8) and (9). Thus here the statement turn components can be heard (at least retrospectively) as having been produced as preliminaries to questions. For, in each case, they 'prepare the ground' for the questions that follow them. In (8) this involves the use of a statement turn component (1 → ) to describe the state of affairs referred to in a subsequent question via the pro-term "it" (2 → ); while in (9) it involves, first, the use of a statement turn component (1 → ) to accomplish a topic shift, and, second, the use of a statement turn component (2 → ) to describe the state of affairs referred to in a subsequent question via the pro-term "that" (3 → ).

(8) (WAO:25.1.79)

HK: ...everybody was too busy .hh keeping ali::ve to write letters ho:me.

(.)

Int: 1 → .hhh The (.) price being asked for these letters is (.) three thousand pou:nds.

2 → Are you going to be able to raise it,  
(0.5)

HK: At the moment it... (continues)

(9) (AP:7.3.79)

MW: ...the victim has no rights in the matte:r.=  
 Int:1→=.hh Lord Longford (.) erm (0.2) if I can turn to the  
     financial compensation (0.2) for a little while.  
     2→ (0.2) .hhh (0.5) u- Very few people I think only one in five  
     actually claim (0.7) any compensation, .hhh er (0.5) being a  
     victim of violent (0.2) crime,  
     3→ .hh is that because people don't kno:w they can claim?  
     (0.7)  
 LL: Well I...(continues)

Statement turn components are sometimes marked as question prefaces through the production of a class of objects which Schegloff (1980) refers to as 'preliminaries to preliminaries', or 'pre-pre's' for short. These objects constitute action projections (e.g., "Let me ask you a question") which, by projecting the occurrence of some action, provide for the talk that directly follows them being heard and treated as 'leading up to' the performance of that action (ibid.). Thus in (10) the interviewer's "and I think you kno:w that at least the pre-amble to this question is true..." (lines 3-4) explicitly marks the statement turn components that follow it (lines 4-14) as being prefatory to a question - a question which subsequently arrives at lines 14-18

(10) (WW:1984)

1 PJ: ...has been happening.  
 2 Int: I tell you what I would like to press you o:n,=and it's  
 3       → [ this,=and I think you kno:w that at least the pre-amble to  
 4        this question is true... .hh We'll see what you think of the  
 5        question in general. .hhh Your admission you see (0.8) that  
 6        there is a trade off here between the nee:d to reduce this  
 7        expenditure (0.2) and formally use democratic rights .hh  
 8        will upset some Tories. .hhh Not all Tories agree: with the  
 9        government's policy in trying to reduce expenditure like  
 10.       that. .hh There might even be some Torie:s .hh who unlike  
 11        even me: don't think that public expenditure is an important  
 12        issue anyway. .hh But what they do think is hellish  
 13        important (0.2) is local democracy (0.2) and running their  
 14        own Shi:re:s in their own way. .hh Aren't you afra:id that  
 15        by what you have said to me: .h you have made a rod for

16            your own back and simply strengthened the arguments of those  
 17            people .h especially in the Lo:rds .hh who think that local  
 18            democracy is much more important than cutting expenditure.=  
 19    PJ:      =tch Well .hhh e:r anybody who... (continues)

With this much to hand, two points regarding the production of statement turn components prior to the production of questioning turn components are in order.

(1)      While, as we have seen, interviewers sometimes explicitly indicate that statement turn components are preliminaries to questioning turn components, more often than not they rely upon interviewees to recognise for themselves that they are being produced as such. Thus, for example, an action projection is not used by the interviewer in (8) above.

(2)      On occasion, statement turn components that are produced by interviewers without action projections having been used are hearable, at least initially, as possible instances of straightforward post-answer challenges. On some occasions they are just that, and as such represent breaches in the normative question-answer format. More generally, however, they are followed by questioning turn components which provide retrospectively for their characterisation either as first components in (statement) + (tag question) turns or as question prefaces. The following, which is derived from (2), is a case in point.

(2) (WAO:13.3.79:Detail)

AS:        .hh er The difference is that it's the press that constantly  
             call me a Ma:rxist when I do not, (.) and never have (.) er  
             er given that description of myself. [ .hh I ]  
 Int:1 →      [ But I ] 've heard you-  
             I've heard you'd be very happy to: to: er .hhhh er describe  
             yourself as a Marxist.

2 → Could it be that with an election in the offing you're  
 anxious to play down that you're a Marxist. ]  
 AS: [ e r ] Not at all...  
 (continues)

Here the interviewer begins his turn with a statement turn component (1 → ) that can be heard as a counter-claim to the interviewee's assertion in prior turn that he has never described himself as a Marxist. Subsequently, however, the interviewer lengthens his turn through the production of a question (2 → ) which builds off that counter and retrospectively formulates it as a question preface. In short, the interviewer packages a 'challenge' in a turn that is, in its entirety, minimally characterisable as being occupied with the work of questioning.

#### 4.3.3b Interviewees routinely treat interviewers' statement turn components as preliminaries to questioning turn components

On those occasions in which interviewers produce statement turn components prior to the production of questioning turn components, interviewees routinely attend to the constraint that they should confine themselves to answering interviewers' questions. They do so by (1) routinely holding off until at least the first possible completion of a first questioning turn component before initiating a next turn, and by (2) routinely withholding a class of behavioural tokens, which Schegloff (1982) refers to as 'continuers', at the possible completions of statement turn components.

##### 4.3.3b.1 Withheld Turn Initiation

In ordinary conversation transition-relevance places arise at the possible completion(s) of each turn-constructural unit (Sacks et al.

1974), and analysis of conversational materials has shown that speakers have the technical capacity to time the initiation of their turns with precision in relation to these places (see, e.g., Jefferson 1973, 1983; Jefferson and Schegloff 1975). Thus, for example, in (11) and (12) speakers can be observed initiating next turns with precision timing at possible unit/turn completion points which happen not to be the points at which the respective current speakers relinquish the floor.

(11) (NB:II:5:R:10)

- E: .hh WELL AH'LL SEE YUH LAYDER.  
 (0.5)  
 L: Oh u-okay ah'll be do:wn I gotta wash out my clo:thes  
 'n ah'll be down in a li'l w<sup>h</sup>ile  
 E: → [ I : know: y i h d\*o ]

(12) (NB:III:3:5)

- A: Uh you been down here before [ havenche.  
 B: → [ Yeh.

Against this background, the fact that interviewees overwhelmingly do not initiate turns at the possible completions of interviewers' statement turn components can be seen to reflect a systematic withholding of turn initiation. And, given the structure of the news interview turn-taking system, such a withholding can in turn be seen to reflect an orientation on the part of interviewees to the constraint that they should confine themselves to producing answers to interviewers' questions.

This aspect of news interview conduct is clearly observable in (6), in which an interviewer produces a statement turn component prior to a tag question, and in (8), in which an interviewer produces a statement

turn component prior to a questioning turn component which provides retrospectively for its characterisation as a question preface. Thus, despite having the technical capacity to do so, neither of the interviewees in these extracts initiates a turn at a possible completion of an interviewer's statement turn component (0 → ). Rather they withhold turn initiation until an interviewer's turn reaches a possible completion of a subsequent questioning turn component, and is thus hearable as a possibly completed question (→ ).

(6) (AP:7.3.79)

LL: =And of course u- a large (0.7) proportion of people simply don't know it exi:sts.  
 Int: .hhh And w- if it does exist it- it exists in rather sma:ll amounts,  
 0 → doesn't it.  
 (.)  
 LL: → Yes. =Well like the case...(continues)

(8) (WAO:25.1.79)

HK: ...everybody was too busy .hh keeping ali::ve to write letters ho::me.  
 (.)  
 Int: .hhh The (.) price being asked for these letters is (.) three thousand pou::nds.  
 0 → Are you going to be able to raise it,  
 (0.5)  
 HK: → At the moment it...(continues)

(Other instances of interviewees withholding turn initiation at the possible completions of interviewers' statement turn components are located in (2), (7), (9) and (10)).

Having thus observed that interviewees systematically withhold turn initiation at the possible completions of interviewers' statement turn components, we can now turn to consider the second of the practices

through which interviewees routinely display an orientation to turn-type pre-allocation in these contexts: namely the complementary withholding of continuers.

#### 4.3.3b.2 The Withholding of Continuers

According to Schegloff (1982), continuers are bits of behaviour - such as "uh huh", "mm hm", and "yeah" - which recipients regularly produce at transition-relevance places during the course of extended units of talk. In producing them, recipients display that they are passing the opportunity to take the 'full' turns at talk which they might otherwise properly initiate, and thereby (1) exhibit their understanding that a yet to be completed extended unit of talk is currently in progress, and (2) leave the current speaker free to continue. Two examples of these objects are observable in the following extract (from a phone-in programme on American radio) where they are produced at the possible completions of statement turn components that have been marked as preliminaries to a question through the production of an action projection at line 4.

(11) BC, Red:190)

- 1 B: I've listen' to all the things that chu've said, an'  
2 I agree with you so much.  
3 B: Now,  
4 B: I wanna ask you something,  
5 B: I wrote a letter.  
6 (pause)  
7 A: → Mh hm,  
8 B: T' the governor.  
9 A: → Mh hm::,  
10 B: -telling 'im what I thought about i(hh)m!  
11 (A): (Sh:::!)  
12 B: Will I get an answer d'you think,  
13 A: Ye:s,

Against this background interviewees, in withholding continuers at the possible completions of interviewers' statement turn components, display an orientation to turn-type pre-allocation in two interrelated ways. Firstly, they avoid doing something that is not minimally recognisable as answering. Secondly, they avoid treating the possible completions of such turn components as transition-relevance places: that is, as places at which they have a right to talk.

The systematic withholding of continuers by interviewees is illustrated in (10) in which an interviewer's turn passes through several possible completions of several statement turn components (0→) before a question (which in this case has been explicitly marked as upcoming (at lines 3-4) is produced at lines 17-21.

(10) (WW:1984)

- 1 PJ: ...has been happening.
- 2 Int: I tell you what I would like to press you on,=and it's
- 3 this,=and I think you know that at least the pre-amble to
- 4 this question is true:e. .hhh We'll see what you think of the
- 5 question in general. .hhh Your admission you see (0.8) that
- 6 there is a trade off here between the nee:d to reduce this
- 7 expenditure (0.2) and formally use democratic rights .hh
- 8 will upset some Tories.
- 9 o → .hhh Not all Tories agree: with the government's policy in
- 10 o → trying to reduce expenditure like that.
- 11 .hh There might even be some Torie:s .hh who unlike even me:
- 12 don't think that public expenditure is an important issue
- 13 o → anyway.
- 14 .hh But what they do think is hellish important (0.2) is
- 15 o → local democracy (0.2)
- 16 o → and running their own shi:re:s in their own way.
- 17 .hh Aren't you afraid that by what you have said to me: .h
- 18 you have made a rod for your own back and simply
- 19 strengthened the arguments of those people .h especially in
- 20 the Lo:rd's .hh who think that local democracy is much more
- 21 important than cutting expenditure.=
- 22 PJ: =tch Well .hhh e:r anybody who... (continues)



Here, then, the interviewee not only refrains from initiating full turns at talk at the possible completions of the interviewer's statement turn components, but also similarly refrains from producing continuers (i.e., 'passing' turns at talk).

In sum, in holding off from initiating both full and passing turns at the possible completions of interviewers' statement turn components, interviewees attend to the fact that the completions of such units do not stand as transition-relevance places in the context of interviewers' turns in news interview interaction. That is, through these withholdings, interviewees display their understanding that, regardless of how many possible unit completion points an interviewer's turn passes through, transfers of speakership from interviewers to interviewees do not properly become relevant until such a turn is hearable as a possibly completed question.

Finally it may be noted that just as interviewees withhold continuers, so also do interviewers. Thus, for example, while the interviewee's answer in (12) passes through several transition-relevance places - that is, several places at which it is hearable as being possibly complete ( $0 \rightarrow$ ), the interviewer remains silent until subsequently initiating a full question turn ( $\rightarrow$ ).

(12) (ATV T:15.11.79)

- Int: ....hhh bu- ha- ha- Have you any sort of criminal connections or anything,=e:r
- TS:  $0 \rightarrow$  Not at all.
- $0 \rightarrow$  I- I was working for the Gas Board at the time as a salesman.
- $0 \rightarrow$  I had no (0.2) emphatically no e:r associates that would have criminal records.=
- $0 \rightarrow$  =Nor did I associate with people with criminal records.
- $0 \rightarrow$  .hhh I- I- I was living a life of- of- of a family man in Stockton-on-Tees,=

o → =where I was a representative of the Gas Board.  
          → .hhh And it was out of the blue to me.  
Int: → .hh Were you surprised when... (continues)

The production of extended answers by interviewees is discussed later in this chapter. With regard to the withholding of continuers during their course, however, it may be noted that this largely reflects an orientation on the part of interviewers to the constraint that they should properly avoid producing talk *which is not implicated in the work* of questioning. Thus through the withholding of continuers interviewers, like interviewees, display an orientation to turn-type pre-allocation on a segment-by-segment basis.<sup>4</sup>

#### 4.3.4 Interviews are overwhelmingly opened by interviewers

Given that interviewees should confine themselves to answering interviewers' questions, a news interview cannot properly be underway until an interviewer has produced a question for an interviewee to answer. Thus, although the news interview turn-taking system says nothing directly about who should open an interaction, its structure is such that only an interviewer has rights to do so.

The implications of this restriction, of course, differ somewhat according to the numbers of parties who are assigned the role of interviewer for a projected interaction. If only a single interviewer is on hand then the first turn of an interview is effectively pre-allocated to that party. But if, by contrast, two or more interviewers are on hand then, since either or any of these parties may properly produce such a turn, its allocation remains to be managed via some procedure. Irrespective of such considerations, however, this aspect of the news interview turn-taking system's operation stands in marked contrast to

that of the corresponding system for mundane conversation. For, as a local management system, the latter provides for any party opening an encounter.

#### 4.3.5 The allocation of turns in multi-party interviews is ordinarily managed by interviewers

News interview interaction, like mundane interaction, involves the use of both 'current speaker selects next' and self-selection turn-allocational techniques. However, the news interview turn-taking system, by contrast with the corresponding system for conversation, does not provide all of the parties to an interaction with equal access to the use of these techniques. This aspect of the news interview turn-taking system's operation derives in part from the fact that questions and answers are respectively first and second parts of an adjacency pair structure. Regarding this, we may make three general observations concerning the differences between a first action and a second action of an adjacency pair.

(1) By virtue of the fact that they project and require the occurrence of second pair parts, first pair parts can be used to select next speakers. Thus, by addressing such an object to a specific party, a current speaker selects that party to speak next (Sacks et al. 1974:717).

(2) Second pair parts, by contrast, cannot be used to allocate a next turn. For as Sacks et al. (1974:717) note, although such objects are addressed to specific parties - namely the producers of the preceding first pair parts - they do not select those parties to speak next since they do not, in themselves, project and require some activity to be done by those parties in next turns. As such, then, if the recipients of

first pair parts confine themselves to producing second pair parts, next turns are left to be allocated through self-selection.

(3) While parties can self-select in order to produce first pair parts without some other activity having had to have been done first, parties cannot self-select in order to produce second pair parts except in the context of an undirected first pair part having been produced by a co-participant.

In the light of these observations, it can be seen that, by pre-allocating first pair part questions to *interviewers*, and second pair part answers to *interviewees*, the news interview turn-taking system strongly defines the access of participants to the use of turn-allocational techniques. Thus, while interviewers (as questioners) are provided with access to the use of both 'current speaker selects next' and self-selection turn-allocational techniques (cf. observations (1) and (3) above), interviewees (as answerers) are afforded no access whatsoever to the use of 'current speaker selects next' turn-allocational techniques (cf. observation (2) above), and can only properly acquire access to the use of self-selection turn-allocational techniques following the production of undirected questions (cf. observation (3) above).

In the remainder of this section, some of the features of news interview interaction which result from these restrictions will be outlined. With respect to this part of the analysis, it should be noted that, since the ordering of speakers only becomes significant in the context of interactions involving three or more interlocutors, we will be concerned only with the management of turn allocation in multi-party settings. Thus we will focus in turn on multi-interviewer and multi-interviewee interviews.

#### 4.3.5.1 Multi-Interviewer Interviews

Multi-interviewer interviews involve two or more interviewers/questioners and a single interviewee/answerer. Accordingly, since there is only one interviewee on hand, the issue of who should speak after each question is automatically resolved. As for the issue of which of the several interviewers asks a next question after any given interviewee answer, this is sometimes handled by modifying the basic turn-taking organisation so as to either pre-arrange the order in which interviewers are to ask questions, or else to provide one interviewer with special rights to manage the allocation of post-answer turns. More generally, however, this matter is managed or negotiated on an entirely local basis with, for example, interviewers claiming turns by starting up first.

In this latter context, interviewers sometimes find themselves self-selecting simultaneously (or almost simultaneously) at the (possible) completion of an interviewee's answer, and thus competing for a turn to ask the interviewee a next question.

(15) (AP:7.3.79)

MW: =telling all about it.=  
→ Int 1: =Do you [suspect it's 'cause they're paying=  
→ Int 2: i-  
Int 1: =low lo- low amounts .hh in compensation.=  
MW: =Oh it would... (continues)

As a rule, however, interviewers manage the allocation of post-answer turns without such competing starts (and non-vocal procedures may well be implicated in the accomplishment of this feature).

(16) (AP:7.3.79)

- AB: ....hh Yet some seemed quite interesting.= ( )=  
→ Int 1: =How d'you test their intelligence,=d'you give them a te::st?  
(0.3) hh<sub>hh</sub>  
AB: Well your: or ( )- (.) the letters are:: (.) you  
English write we:ll. (.) A:nd e:r you write a good lette:r.  
(.) And e:r (0.8) there would like to be- you could learn a  
lo:t from reading a letter from a girl.  
(.)  
→ Int 2: .hhhh A final question to you Andy,=e:r would you: e:r (.)  
advise other people to...(continues)

#### 4.3.5.2 Multi-Interviewee Interviews

In multi-interviewee interviews, there is one interviewer/questioner and two or more interviewees/answerers. Here, then, it is the allocation of interviewees' turns, as opposed to the allocation of interviewers' turns, that remains to be managed.

In brief, there are two ways in which interviewees can acquire opportunities to answer questions in multi-interviewee interactions. Firstly, an interviewer may direct a question to a specific interviewee and thereby select that party to speak next. Secondly, in the event of an interviewer producing an undirected question, interviewees may self-select in order to respond to it.

With this said, however, undirected questions are only very rarely produced in practice; and, consequently, interviewees characteristically speak only after they have been selected to do so by an interviewer's directed question. In the extracts below, for example, a particular interviewee is selected to answer through the use of an address term (in (17)), and through the production of a supplementary or 'follow up' question (in (18)).

(17) (WAO:14.2.79)

DW: ...the House of Commons.=

Int: → =.hhh Alan Watkins do you think he's gone further than before.=

AW: =er No I can't...(continues)

(18) (AP:7.3.79)

((Extract from an interview involving five interviewees))

Int: =Don't you want a minister for victi:ms.=Is that one of your cor-rec<sub>o</sub>mendations.

LL: [er I do::.. =But I don't want er (0.5) e:r people to sort of er get involved in this as an administrative thing.=I mean I've had a lot of experience of that and that's the way my mind works.=But the subject is much .h vaster than er (.) is suggested by .hhh the particular proposal,=the minister here: or minister there:.  
(.)

Int: → D'you think your bills got any chance of beco(h)mi(h)ng law.=

LL: =Oh yes...(continues)

One consequence of the recurrent production of directed questions by interviewers is that, on those occasions in which their turns reach possible completion points without a next speaker having been selected, interviewees, attending to the likelihood that an interviewer will select one of them to answer, routinely hold off from initiating a response. This can become especially apparent when interviewers cease talking at such points. For, as is illustrated by (19), the undirected questions which result regularly engender gaps.

(19) (WAO:15.2.79)

((Extract from an interview involving two interviewees))

PJ: ...some me:a:ns of talking to these people.  
(.)

Int: Finally gentlemen and in a wo:rd,=do you regard this new deal between the government and the TUC as .hhh better than

nothi::ng=a constructive achievement, (0.2) or a non-event.  
.hhhh  
→ (0.5)

Such occurrences may be remedied either through interviewees self-selecting, as in (19a), or through interviewers opting to continue (and, for example, turning their previously undirected questions into directed ones), as in (20).

(19a) (WAO:15.2.79)

Int: ...nothi::ng=a constructive achievement, (0.2) or a non-  
event. .hhhh  
(0.5)  
SB: → It (0.2) could be helpfu:l,=if we don't regard it as too  
important.  
(0.8)  
PJ: .hh I think...(continues)

(20) (WAO:15.2.79)

((Extract from the same interview as (19))

SB: ...Let's build on it. ( )-  
Int: Well now coming to this business of a  
national annual er- assessment on something like what the  
.hhh Germans have.=Which the Prime Minister .hhh er has e:rm  
(.) got agreement on.=Is it a good idea: uhm,  
(0.2)  
Int: → Sam Brittan?  
(.)  
SB: .hhh I think it's...(continues)

In both cases, however, the systematic delaying or withholding of answers in these contexts, clearly evidences the interviewees' expectation that interviewers will actively manage the allocation of their turns. Here, then, we have a specification of an expectancy which, although it does not derive directly from the operation of the news interview turn-taking



system, nonetheless impinges on the organisation of turn-taking in settings in which that system is employed.

The routine production of directed questions by interviewers in multi-interviewee interviews also has significant implications for the ordering of speakers. With regard to this, it is necessary to begin by noting that a different set of considerations come into play regarding what constitutes a completed question-answer sequence according to whether a question is directed or undirected. Thus in the case of directed questions, the completions of question-answer sequences properly arise at the completions of answers in next turns. For such questions specifically project and require answers by selected next speakers, and cannot (properly) be answered by other parties. In the case of undirected questions, however, the point at which a question-answer sequence is completed can be a matter of negotiation. For an undirected question can be answered by any of its recipients and, as such, may be answered by some or all of those parties in subsequent turns. Accordingly, if all of the recipients of an undirected question produce answers, sequence completion arises with the completion of a final answer. Alternatively, however, a sequence may be treated as complete after an earlier answer (for example, after an answer produced adjacent to the question).

With these considerations to hand, the following points can be made concerning the ordering of speakers in multi-interviewee interviews.

(1) The news interview turn-taking system effectively pre-allocates turns following completed question-answer sequences to interviewers. It does so by requiring that interviewees confine themselves to answering interviewers' questions, and thus restricting the

right to self-select in such environments to interviewers. Thus, although this system does not directly specify who speaks when, it can have as one of its by-products a measure of turn pre-allocation.

(2) It follows from this that, in the event of a question being directed, the news interview turn-taking system effectively pre-allocates next-but-one turn to the interviewer. It does so because, as was noted above, the completion of a question-answer sequence which is initiated by a directed question properly arises at the completion of an answer in next turn. A further consequence of the recurrent production of directed questions by interviewers, then, is that multi-interviewee interviews are characterised by an A-B-A-B turn order in terms of the institutional identity contrast interviewer/interviewee.

(3) In the context of undirected questions, by contrast, the news interview turn-taking system provides for some variation in the order in which interviewers and interviewees speak. For, as was indicated above, while the completion of an answer produced adjacent to an undirected question may turn out to represent the completion of a question-answer sequence, sequence completion may just as well arise at the completion of some subsequent answer. However, if an undirected question is answered by all of the interviewees in receipt of it, then the issue of turn pre-allocation arises once again. For once a final answer is underway, an interviewer (for the reasons noted above) will have sole rights to self-select at its possible completions, and thus to speak in next turn.

#### 4.3.6 Interviews are customarily closed by interviewers

As a local management system, the conversational turn-taking system provides for any party closing down an interaction. In mundane conversation, however, closings are rarely accomplished unilaterally. For, in attending to the fact that unilateral closings are likely to be characterised as instances of 'abruptness' or 'rudeness', conversationalists routinely accomplish the terminations of their interactions collaboratively. Thus conversational closings are generally accomplished through terminal exchanges (such as 'goodbye'-'goodbye') which follow pre-closing sections that have provided for the relevance of their initiation (Schegloff and Sacks 1973).

In news interviews, by contrast with in mundane conversation, the option of closing an interaction is not equally available to all parties. For, given the constraint(s) that interviewers and interviewees should respectively produce questions and answers, it follows that (1) news interview closings can only properly be brought about through an interviewer refraining from initiating a next question-answer sequence, and that (2) if an interviewer does this, and produces a closing object (i.e. talk directed to the accomplishment of a closing), then an interview will effectively be closed from this point - regardless of whether or not the closing is acknowledged by an interviewee. Thus, although interviewees frequently respond to interviewers' closing turns (1 → ) with acknowledgements (2 → ), these objects are technically (though not perhaps ritually) redundant.

(21) (AP:7.3.79)

Int: .h You gonna write more comedy now.  
(.)

AR: Depends on whether they let me. hhhh  
(0.2)  
Int:1→ Anna Raeburn (.) thankyou very much.=  
AR: 2→ =Thankyou:.

On the topic of the technical redundancy of acknowledgements following interviewers' closing turns, it can be suggested that an orientation to this feature is observable in at least two phenomena. First: Interviewers, having produced closing turn components (1→ ), regularly preempt interviewee responses by proceeding immediately to address the broadcast audience (2→ ).

(22) (DP:27.9.81)

JS: ....hhh And I've no doubt he'd be de:lighted to see you,=as  
he always will be.=  
Int:1→ =Now I must thankyou Mister Silkin,=  
2→ =and now to David Dimbleby in the ha:ll.

Second: Editors recurrently cut recorded interviews at the completions of interviewers' closing turn components, thus deleting any subsequent responses from interviewees.

(23) (WW:25.3.79)

PJ: ...which is which- which party can best deal with the:  
trade unions,=and which party can best manage the economy.=  
Int: =Gentlemen,=thankyou very much.=  
→ =(Interview cut)

In sum, since the news interview turn-taking system logically operates until no further questions are forthcoming from an interviewer, interviewers may properly decline to produce a question and close down a news interview interaction. By the same token, however, interviewees are afforded no rights whatsoever to initiate and accomplish closings. Thus,

regardless of whether it involves a refusal to answer a prior question, the termination of an interview by an interviewee may occasion the construction of character and motive ascriptions which reflect unfavourably upon him. For, whether it is accomplished instead of an answer or after an answer, such a termination will be hearable (given the normative organisation of news interviews) as a refusal to answer further questions. Given these considerations, then, it is perhaps hardly surprising that instances of news interviews being closed down by interviewees are extremely rare.

By way of concluding this section, we may finally note that when instances of interviewees terminating news interviews do arise, broadcasters and journalists frequently attend to the accountability of such occurrences and/or treat them as news in their own right. This observation can be illustrated by reference to (24) and (25). Thus following (24), in which a leading trade union official terminates an interview being conducted in the foyer of a conference centre, the linkman on the television programme in which the interview was sited attended to the accountability of the interviewee's conduct by passing an ironic comment on it through an 'eyebrow flash'.

(24) (TUC:1981:Simplified)

Int: But many people believe the social contract was a great  
succe::ss.

LM: → I think we've had a very good interview Vincent, I think  
that you've asked good questions,=I've given good  
answers,=and I think we should leave it at that.=  
=((Cut to Linkman))

And (25), which involves a rather more dramatic case, subsequently attracted widespread media attention and discussion.

(25) (NR:1982)

Int: But why should the public on this issu::e .hhh as regards  
the future of th Royal Navy believe you,=a transient .hhh er  
here toda:y and .hh if I may say so gone tomorro:w  
politician[rather than] a senior officer of many=

JN: ( ) ]

Int: =years [experience]

JN: → [I'm sorry.] I'm I'm fed up with this interview  
really. ( ) .  
(1.2)

Int: Thankyou Mister Nott.

In this latter extract, which warrants more extensive consideration, a Minister of Defence is being interviewed in the light of his announcement that he is to retire from politics. In the face of what he clearly regards to be a particularly unco-operative question (characterising him as a "transient... here toda:y...gone tomorro:w politician"), the Minister refuses to produce an answer and instead closes the interview down: rising from his chair and removing the microphone from his tie as he does so. The extent to which this occurrence was deemed to be 'newsworthy' was reflected in the fact that it was considered to be a significant enough event to be included in BBC Television's review of its news and current affairs coverage in 1982. It may also be noted that in addition to being widely reported and discussed by newspaper, television and radio journalists, it was also the subject of a large number of letters to the major British newspapers and periodicals. All in all, then, the 'newsworthiness' of the Minister's termination of the interview was generally considered to be far greater than that of the interview per se.

To sum up: Whereas in conversation closings may be initiated by any party, and are as a rule collaboratively achieved, in news interviews

they are properly initiated and accomplished by one party, namely an interviewer. Instances of interviewees terminating news interview interactions are rare, and when they do occur regularly attract widespread attention and discussion.

#### 4.3.7 Repairs on breaches in the standard question-answer format are initiated by interviewers

On occasion, interviewers and/or (more commonly) interviewees breach the constraints which the news interview turn-taking system places on turn-type. As a rule, however, some or all of the parties to an interaction subsequently attend (or re-attend) to these constraints by collaboratively reinstituting the pre-specified question-answer format.

In this section, we will (1) focus on two systematically occurring types of breaches, (2) describe two related procedures through which interviewees, in breaching the pre-specified question-answer format, regularly display an orientation to the violative status of their talk, and (3) consider some aspects of the procedures through which breaches are repaired.

##### 4.3.7.1 Breaches

An examination of news interview interaction reveals that breaches in the pre-specified question-answer format fall largely into two broad classes. A first class includes those breaches which represent straightforward turn-type violations. These involve parties breaching the normative question-answer format in turns that have been acquired through procedures which are provided for by the news interview turn-taking system. An example of a straightforward turn-type violation is located in (26) where the 'offending' party is an interviewer who, having

self-selected at a possible completion of an interviewee's answer, contests that answer with a statement turn component.

(26) (E:7.7.80)

LD: ....hhh [ We talked -  
Int: What will you ] talk to them about though.  
LD: About the use of whether it's possible to find a method  
through to a front end system.=  
Int: → =But the method is terribly straightforward.=  
LD: =Oh it un- oh n(h)o n(h)o...(continues)

Another example occurs in (27): but here, by contrast, the 'offending' party is an interviewee who breaches the pre-specified question-answer format by declining to answer the interviewer's preceding question.

(27) (WAO:24.1.80)

Int: =But why- why is Doctor Sakarov u- .hhh not being er given a  
trial of these alleged misdeeds,=.hhh er when and you  
keep talking about human rights?=  
SB: → =Yes.=Let us speak about (.) Olympic Games. .hhh If you want  
to: (.) have an interview on a different subject you will  
have to: .hh deal with the people who will .hhh deal with  
those er subjects on the (opposite).=  
Int: =Are you saying...(continues)

A second class of breaches includes those which in addition to constituting turn-type violations also involve an interlocutor speaking 'out of turn': that is, speaking in an environment in which some other party should properly be talking. An example of a breach which represents a turn order violation is found in (28) which is drawn from a multi-interviewee interview.



(28) (WAO:15.2.79)

1 SB: ...and far less on incomes policy .hh than he claims to  
 2 be:.=  
 3 Int: =Do you think the implications of this document are a (.)  
 4 tough budget.  
 5 SB: .hhh We:ll .hh again it is important how it's presented. I  
 6 disagree with the idea .hhh that you have to have .h a  
 7 budget .hh to punish workers for wage claims.  
 .  
 . ((13 lines of answer omitted))  
 .  
 21 The most important think .hh is that Mister Healey .h should  
 22 stick to his guns.=  
 23 PJ:1→ [You s ee  
 24 Int: = [ Well I-  
 25 (.)  
 26 PJ:2→ I disagree with- with Sam Brittan on a- in a most (.)  
 27 fundamental way about this,...(continues)

Here an interviewee self-selects (1→) at a possible completion of a co-interviewee's answer (lines 5-22) to an interviewer's directed 'question' (lines 3-4), and uses the turn he manages to obtain (2→) to disagree with materials produced in that answer. Thus he not only breaches the constraint that his turns should be answers, but does so in an environment in which interviewers have sole rights to talk: that is, post an answer to a directed question (cf. section 4.3.5.). As such, then, his turn represents both a turn-type and a turn order violation.

Two further examples of turn-type/turn order violations are observable in (29) which once again is taken from a multi-interviewee interview.

(29) (IRC:20.10.80)

1 TB-D: ...You won't have a mixed soc[i:ety ( )].  
 2 Int: [Aren't you creating] two  
 3 nations though Tony Beaumont-Dark.  
 4 TB-D: [N o,] = on the contrary surely  
 5 we're creating one nation,=we're giving people the right to

6 stay tenants if they wish to do so. .hhh That's creating one  
 7 nation. .hhh What creates two nations is saying that .hh a  
 10 council tenant in some way or other .hh is somewhat  
 11 inferior to anybody else.=  
 12 DW: =But-  
 13 TB-D: [But] this proves it is no:t.=  
 14 DW:1 → =Yes but what about those council tenants that Tony must take  
 15 into consideration .h who live in flats,=and very very few  
 16 flats are being sold off, .h in Birmingham for example the  
 17 number of flats actually sold .hh could be counted on one of  
 18 both hands. .hh It's the better type of home- of  
 19 accommodation. .hh And if there's a right (.) er as Tony has  
 20 been telling us .hh er er a fundamental right apparently  
 21 for tenants to buy .h why not for private tenants. .hh When  
 22 the matter was raised in the House of Commons .hh when we  
 23 asked the Tory ministers .h why not give p- {.) private  
 24 tenants the right to buy .h then of course we were told  
 25 it's out of the question,=why not give (.) council=  
 26 TB-D: =We'll look-  
 27 DW: [p r i] vate tenant(s) as well.  
 28 TB-D:2 → [Well no:w ma] y I say this [( )] t o=  
 29 DW: [( )]  
 30 TB-D: =the:: [t o-] to this subject,=i- it's a very interesting=  
 31 DW: [( )]  
 32 TB-D: =point because all can't do it .hh David says none should do  
 33 it. .hh If I may say so if you work on that basis you're  
 34 always going to have a- a- a- a very divisive society,=what  
 35 we're trying to do .hhh is to...(continues)

Here, as in (28), an interviewee breaches the question-answer format (1 → ) by initiating a turn at a possible completion of a co-interviewee's answer (lines 4-11 and line 13) to an interviewer's directed question (lines 2-3). This breach involves that interviewee in expressing an alternative view to that put by his co-interviewee in the prior turn. Subsequently, the latter successfully self-selects at a possible completion of this violative turn, and proceeds to respond to some of the points made during its course (2 → ). In doing so, he (1) extends the breach initiated by the former, and (2), like the former, talks 'out of turn'. Both of these interviewees, then, produce utterances which represent turn order, as well as turn-type violations.

#### 4.3.7.2 'Requests for Permission'

It is noteworthy that, having initiated a turn in a context in which the news interview turn-taking system effectively restricts the right to speak to interviewers, interviewees often start out by producing objects which display an orientation to the fact that they are talking 'out of turn'. These objects take the form of 'requests for permission' (Schegloff 1980) and fall into two broad groups: (1) those which are produced as genuine 'requests' requiring responses from interviewers; and (2) those which, by contrast, are produced as token 'requests': that is, as first components in projected turns. An example of the former type of object may be observed in (30) where an interviewee terminates his turn at the completion of a 'request' component (line 5), and only proceeds to produce his projected talk (lines 8+) once the interviewer has given his permission for its production (line 6).

(30) (AP:7.3.79)

1 LL; ...And therefore I'm not going to accept the criticism that  
2 I haven't tried to help victims.=I've (.) been trying to  
3 help them (0.2) off and on for twenty-five years.=  
4 ( ): =.hhhh=  
5 MW: → =Can I- can I say something about this?  
6 Int: [Yes in] deed.  
7 (0.5)  
8 MW: e:r (0.7) As (0.5) Frank (.) Longford knows so well .hh er  
9 my views...(continues)

An example of the latter type of object (which is more common) is located in (31).

(31) (AP:7.3.79)

LL: ...there was no evidence whatever that stiffer penalties di-  
diminish crime.=

MW: → =Can I make a point about that.=.hhh Which is that (.) if only this country...(continues)

Here, then, rather than terminating his turn upon completion of the 'request' component and awaiting a response from the interviewer, the interviewee (MW) immediately proceeds to produce his projected talk. Moreover, the interviewer displays his understanding of this object as having been produced as a first component in a turn by not treating its possible completion(s) as possible turn completion(s). In as much as they are not produced as genuine 'requests for permission', then, objects of this sort involve interviewees in displaying only a minimal or token orientation to the rights of interviewers to speak in the environments in which they have self-selected.

These observations can be developed a little by making two related observations concerning the production of genuine and token 'requests for permission' by interviewees. First: Such objects may be designed to project the occurrence of different types of violative actions. Thus, for example, whereas the token 'request' in (31) above projects the making of a point, the token 'request' in the following extract projects the occurrence of a question.

(32) (E:7.7.80:simplified)

GJ: ...So the situation has not changed .hhh in terms of their position and their capacity and their ability to earn,  
(0.2)  
GJ: Now they've ( )-]  
WD: → [C a n I a s k] what the magic is about the three  
year:rs,=( ) .hh Why nothing for- doing for  
three year:rs,=and what happens after three years.  
(.)  
LD: Bill we: have said that...(continues)

Second: In projecting the occurrence of specific actions, such objects can do 'double-duty'. For, in addition to displaying an orientation to the rights of interviewers to talk in some given environment, they can (as action projections) also function as 'pre-pre's'. Thus, for example, in (33) an interviewee's token 'request for permission' (lines 4-5), by projecting the occurrence of a question directed to a co-interviewee ('Mister Scargill'), serves to exempt the statement turn components which directly follow it (lines 5-9) from being treated as 'produced in their own right' (Schegloff 1980). That is, it provides for the treatment of that talk as prefatory to a question (which eventually gets produced at lines 10-11).

(33) (P:28.9.81)

((The 'David' addressed by RH is the interviewer))

- 1 AS: ...the sooner they join the Social Democrats the better  
2 f o r u s ] and better for them?=  
3 RH: [Well let me a-]  
4 RH: → =David may I ask mister Scargill a question you asked him and  
5 he didn't answer a moment ago. I've been in the Labour  
6 Party for thirty-two yea:rs.=I was campaigning for it in  
7 South Yorkshire when you were campaigning for a different  
8 pa:rtly. .hhhh I think my socialist credentials stand up  
9 against yours in any an-analysis.  
10 .hh Do you think people like me ought to leave the Labour  
11 Party. (.) Do you want us in.=  
12 AS: =That's a decision that you have to make...(continues)

In sum, then, it should not be supposed that 'requests for permission' are always produced by interviewees to simply display an orientation to the fact that they are talking 'out of turn'. For, as is illustrated in (33), such objects can be used to do the additional work of marking what follows them as preliminaries 'leading up to' the performance of a projected action.

#### 4.3.7.3 Repairs

Although interviewees are responsible for the majority of breaches in the pre-specified question-answer format, it is interviewers who initiate the repairs on all such occurrences.<sup>5</sup> That the role of repair initiator is invariably assigned to interviewers arises logically from the fact that a restoration of the normative question-answer format can only be brought about through an interviewer producing a question for an interviewee to answer. Thus breaches are basically repaired as follows: An interviewer, having self-selected following (or mid) a violative turn at talk, or having continued talking after violative talk in a current turn, produces a question (1→), and thereby initiates a repair on the preceding breach/es. Then, in next turn, an interviewee produces an answer to that question (2→), thereby collaborating in the restoration of the normative organisation of news interviews.

(28a) (WAO:15.5.79)

- 1 SB: ...and far less on incomes policy .hh than he claims to  
2 be:.=
- 3 Int: =Do you think the implications of this document are a (.)  
4 tough budget.
- 5 SB: .hhh We:ll .hh again it is important how it's presented. I  
6 disagree with the idea .hhhh that you have to have .h a  
7 budget .hh to punish workers for wage claims.  
.  
.  
.  
((13 lines of 'answer' omitted))  
.  
21 The most important thing .hhh is that mister Healey .h  
22 should stick to his gu:ns.=
- 23 PJ: = [You s ]ee-  
24 Int: = [Well I-]  
25 (.)
- 26 PJ: I disagree with- with Sam Brittan on a- in a most (.)  
27 fundamental way about this,  
.  
.  
((7 lines of breach omitted))

35 It will depend upon the degree: to which .hhh e:rm trade  
 36 unionists erm members of trade unions .h will consent to be  
 37 governed by this (.) government,=and by their own lea:ders.=  
 38 Int:1→ =Now can I ask you whether this (.) deal between the  
 39 government and the TUC will do anything to redress the  
 40 balance of bar gaini::ng powe:r, .hhh between unions and  
 41 the rest of the community.=That issue which has .hhh come to  
 42 the forefront of politics in the last few weeks. .hhhh  
 43 PJ:2→ =No very little I would sa:y,=because u:hm the: uhm I mean in  
 44 so far as- as- as- as trade unio:ns uhm obey the- the- the-  
 45 these codes of practice which have been put forward by the  
 46 TUC .hhh u:;hm u:hm with regard to for example picketing  
 47 .hhh the:n erm strikes would be less u:hm damaging to- to-  
 48 to- to employers,-and to that extent I suppose you could  
 49 argue that the- that the- the- the balance would be slightly  
 50 redressed. .hhh But I really don't believe that the effect  
 51 will- will- will- will be significant,-and certainly not in  
 52 the shorter ru:n.=  
 53 Int: =Do you agree,  
 54 (.)  
 55 SB: .hhhh er I think... (continues)

In dealing with breaches for which interviewees are responsible, interviewers quite commonly attend to the accountability of such occurrences. A case in point is (34). Thus here, prior to initiating a repair, an interviewer effectively sanctions an interviewee's preceding violative turn (lines 10-20) by overtly resisting what it topically projects.

(34) (WAO:14.2.79)

1 Int: =Was not Mister Callagha:n and the present Prime Minister  
 2 himself rapped over the knuckles by Harold Wilson .hhhh in  
 3 respect of a vote he: .hh u:hm u:hm u- made in the NEC  
 4 against government policy of the time:?  
 5 AW: e:r That was over 'In Place of Strife' wasn't it,=and the  
 6 whole relationship with the unio:ns in the: erm in the late  
 7 sixties.=This is perfectly true. .hhhh e:r Mister Callaghan  
 8 said e:r as I reca:ll that he owed a duty to erm to th- to  
 9 the Labour movement,=er which he under[stood so well. ]  
 10 DW: [e- Exactly.=This] is  
 11 the contradiction I speak of .hhh The fact of the matter i:s  
 12 there's a New Testament text on the subject about he: who  
 13 lives by the sword shall perish by the sword. .hhhh Jim

14 Callagha:n had brought do:wn er Harold Wilson and Barbara  
 15 Castle on 'In Place of Strife', .hhhh in a rather different  
 16 way from er Tony Benn's activities against (.) Callaghan  
 17 himself. .hhhh But the fact rema:ins Tony Be:nn .hh withi:n  
 18 the rule::s of the Labour Party constitution is using the  
 19 NEC as the Ayatollah Khomeini used his Paris villa .hh to  
 20 bring down the Sha:h.  
 21 Int: → Well let's- let's resist the temptations of history which I  
 22 introduced,=and still mo:re the temptations of parallels  
 23 with Ira:n. .hhh And let me ask you this. .hhhh er= Will  
 24 Mister Benn be sacked.  
 25 AW: er I think it's highly unlikely...(continues)

Another case is observable in (35) where an interviewer, once again prior to initiating a repair, effectively sanctions a series of violative turns (lines 1-13) in the course of formulating the activity in which the 'offending' parties have been engaged as "arguing yet again".

(35) (AP:22.1.80:Simplified)

1 OM: The point i:s .hhh that by and la:rge when people seek out  
 2 an agency like that they have made up their mi:nds.=  
 3 JN: =Not necessarily because .hhh [ certainly the ones]  
 4 OM: [ Unless they come under heavy  
 5 pressure from [the kind of counselling organisation that=  
 6 JN: n o ]  
 7 OM: =you ha:ve in mind, such a li:fe  
 8 JN: [ No I- I- I've u- this is no- [there's no pressure=  
 9 OM: [which tries to make a=  
 10 JN: =at all,=no. e:r ( ) ]  
 11 OM: =woman feel guilty and [ takes no respons[ibility] for=  
 12 JN: [ n o : ]  
 13 OM: =the [consequences ( ) ]  
 14 Int: → [Now can I put one point to] you,=that I- I- I- as I hear  
 15 you arguing yet again,=  
 16 JN: =Yes.  
 17 Int: .hhh Wouldn't the idea:l situation Jill be that we have more  
 18 National Health Service clinics, ( ) I mean are there  
 19 plans to open more:, .hhh to perhaps take over from  
 20 The [private sector. ]  
 21 JN: [ .hhh Well I think ] that if... (continues)

A final and rather more dramatic example of an interviewer attending to the accountability of violative talk can be seen in (36) in which an interviewee turns the tables on an interviewer by directing questions to



him (about the content of a previous edition of the programme on which they are appearing).

(36) (0:21.4.81)

JG: ...despite the fact there were four major factories that you knew about,=.hhh despite the fact there was a two hundred and thirty million capital investment programme that you knew about,=.hhh that we dealt in companies you stated and restated today, .hhh despite the fact that ninety one per cent of our companies are still there,=and only the marginal ones which you knew were sold, .hhh and you even went so far or your reporter did .hh as to (.) purposely mislead people by suggesting for instance that we owned the Parisian publishing house Brook. Why.=

Int: =s- s- s- Sir James I 'm so sorry ( ) I'm so s- ]

JG: [No,=I'm asking a question now.=

Int: =Well I know,=but e:r

JG: [Well will you tell me why.

Int: → =It's more conventional in these programmes [fo:r ]

JG: [Well] I don't

Int: [mind about convention.] =I'm asking you why (.) you=

JG: [me to ask questions, ]

Int: → =distorted those facts.

JG: (0.2)

Int: Well we didn't distort them. [I mean er ]

JG: [Well w- then] did

you... (continues)

In this case, the interviewer does not initiate a repair. He does, however, sanction the interviewee's conduct by means of thematising the constraint(s) which it stands in breach of.

It only remains to be added here that the sanctioning of breaches by interviewers primarily occurs in contexts in which an interviewer's status as a competent report elicitor is threatened. That is, interviewers tend to sanction those breaches which seriously undermine the normative question-answer format. This is the case, for example, both in (35), in which the sanctioned talk involves two interviewees addressing one another over a series of turns, and in (36), in which the sanctioned talk involves an interviewee directing questions to an

interviewer. Generally speaking, then, interviewers sanction breaches which involve repeated turn order and/or role reversal violations.

#### 4.4 The Design of Answers

Analysis of news interview materials indicates that the participants in these settings routinely attend to the constraint that interviewees should properly produce extended answers. This constraint, however, does not derive from the operation of the news interview turn-taking system which, as noted, leaves turn size to be managed on a local, turn-by-turn basis. Rather it is one of a set of general role assumptions that inform the conduct of speakers in interactions in which this system is employed. Three of the features of news interview interaction which result from an orientation to such an expectancy can be summarised as follows.

First, interviewees characteristically produce answers which pass through several possible completion points. For example:

(12) (ATV T:15.11.79)

- Int: ....hhh bu- ha- ha Have you any sort of criminal connections  
or anything,=e:r
- TS: 1 → Not at all.
- 2 → I- I was working for the Gas Board at the time as a  
salesman.
- 3 → I had no (0.2) emphatically no e:r associates that would  
have criminal records.=
- 4 → =Nor did I associate with people with criminal records.  
.hhhh I- I- I was living a life of- of- of a family man in  
Stockton-on-Tees,=
- 5 → =Where I was a representative of the Gas Board.
- 6 → .hhh And it was out the blue to me.
- Int: .hhh Were you surprised when...(continues)

(37) (WAO:25.1.79:Simplified)

Int: .hhh The main thing that one associates with Oates of course is i- his famous decision to walk out into the snow to his death. .hhh Did the letters u- throw any new light o::n how he came to decide to do th[at?] [Non]e.=

HK: 1 → =None at a:ll.

2 → The last lette:r one of the most interesting was written .hhh fro:m the:: polar plateau: .hhh(.) a:nd it was probably one of the last letters written from the expedition before it finally disappeare:d .hhh but in fact the contents are rather an anti-climax,=

3 → =a lot of it is purely (.) domestic

4 → and (.) certainly nothing was written at a later stage:;=

5 → =everybody was too busy .hh keeping ali::ve to write letters ho::me.  
(.)

Int: .hhh The (.) price being asked for...(continues)

Second, interviewers routinely withhold turn initiation until some nth possible completion point in an interviewee's turn. This phenomenon, which is observable in both (12) and (37) above, can become especially apparent when interviewees cease talking at points at which their answers remain hearably unextended. For such occurrences regularly engender gaps, as in (38) - where the gap is ended when an interviewee opts to continue - and (39) - where it is ended when an interviewer elects to initiate a next question.

(38) (WAO:21.2.79)

Int: And d'you expect these reforms to be pa:ssed?

KB: Yes I do:.

→ (1.2)

KB: The major ones certainly.

(39) (AP:7.3.79)

Int: Is it you:r view that victims get a raw deal in British justice?  
(0.5)

CH: Very. uhhh  
→ (0.7)

Int: And- and what would you like to see done about that.

Third, interviewers regularly attend to the likelihood that interviewees will produce substantial bodies of talk by incorporating into their questions devices that amount to requests for the latter to furnish minimal or relatively unelaborated answers. These devices are most commonly used in contexts in which the time allotted for an interview is about to expire. Examples are the interviewer's "Fairly quickly" in (40) and the interviewer's "in a word" in (19):

(40) (WW:25.3.79)

AW: ...can give a reassuring impression.

Int: → Fairly quickly do you agree with that Mister Jenkins.

PJ: I... (continues) [ Yes I- I-

(19) (WAO:15.2.79)

PJ: ...some mea:ns of talking to these people.  
(.)

Int: → Finally gentlemen and in a word,= do you regard this new deal between the government and the TUC as .hhh better than nothing= A constructive achievement, (0.2) Or a non-event.  
.hhh  
(0.5)

SB: It (0.2) could be...(continues)

Given the expectation that interviewees will ordinarily and properly produce elaborated answers, the question arises as to what resources are available to interviewers for anticipating the completions of their turns. In this connection, it is noticeable that interviewees use a range of procedures which are designed, at least in part, to project clear turn completion points. A detailed consideration of these

procedures has yet to be undertaken. However, by way of illustration, three of the more obvious ones can be briefly introduced.

A first procedure involves interviewees indicating at the outset just what it will take for their answers to be complete. This is the case, for example, in (41) where WD announces that he has two points to make and thereby indicates that the completion of his answer will coincide with the completion of a projected second point:

(41) (WTW:6.5.79)

Int: What about her other appointments, er I think the appointment that surprised everybody was that of e::r Mister Humphrey Atki:ns to Northern Ire:la:nd.

WD: → [Northern Ireland, (0.8) Well I think thats a very good choice for two reaso:ns. First of all (.) Humphrey Atkins hasn't had anything to do: with the politics of Northern Ire:land or indeed the politics of any department .hhh for nine years 'cause he's been in the whip's office. (.) So he starts with an absolutely clean slate. .hh And secondly of course hh mo(h)st o(h)f his b(h)u(h)siness has been dealing with our- other human beings, .hh mainly rather difficult human beings as Chief Whip. .hh So he is not unaccustomed to at least part of the duties of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Int: Bryan Gould,

BG: Yes I think this is...(continues)

A second procedure involves interviewees producing components which draw attention to the fact that an answer has been completed. These post-completion components are often produced when gaps open up due to an interviewer not having immediately proceeded to ask a next question:

(42) (AP:7.3.79)

Int: How did i(h)t co(h)me about.

AR: .hhh e:r My co-writer Len Richmond (.) went to Humphrey Barclay who's the head of comedy at LWT with some idea:s, .hhh a:nd when Humphrey put him on the spot and said what did he really want to do he said he really wanted to write .hhh a series about an agony aunt and Anna Raeburn would

help him. .hhhh And e:r we had an interview five days  
later and we went away to do a pilot script.  
(0.7)

AR: → There it was.

Int: You know its inviting...(continues)

Alternatively, they are built on to answers, as in (43). Here the interviewee, having initially indicated that his turn will reach completion once he has explicated what he regards to be the four tasks of the referenced committee, signals that his turn is complete with his final turn component "Those are four aspects".

(43) (AP:7.3.79)

LL: ...hhh I think it's absolutely iniquitous that we do so little for erm .hhh victim:s and er .hhh this bill that will emerge er: due to the work of our (.) committee and most of all to the work of er (0.8) Michael Whitaker .hhh as I see it we'll have at least uhm (0.5) four tasks er putting them under general headings.=On the one hand there's the question of much more adequate financial compensation.= There's .hhh then the point that's been so well dealt with just now: about the emotional support and .hhh I think that means a whole new social service and maybe the same (0.5) people in the social service departments of the .hhh local authorities can actually do it.=But it needs a new .hh service to provide u: a kind of therapy a (0.7) and emotional support for victims as t- quite apart from the money. .hhh And er than: er: we have (.) undoubtedly got to (0.7) help erm victims to er .hh obtain their legal rights, to know about t-the: the- system in the first place. .hhh And then to go and uhm help them er secure that with their legal advice and so on.= But that's s:- essential.=And fourthly .hh the er the question of the compensation orders that we touched on earlier. The question of .hhhh er sentences which include a  
→ large compensation er element.=Those are four aspects.

Int: Don't you want a...(continues)

A third method through which interviewees project a clear completion point involves them in concluding their turns by re-summarising or formulating the gist of their answers. This method is extremely common, and it frequently involves the recycling or

reiteration - usually in a modified form - of initial answer components.  
Examples of such recycles (which are recurrently produced and understood as final items in an answer in news interview contexts) are these:

(44) (6.6.79)

Int: ...What do you think she would do: in the circumstances of Mister Edwards coming along and asking for further state dole.  
PC: I don't think Mister Edwards would get another state dole.  
Int: What d'you think Perg.  
PW: I think that in the circumstances that you've described she would e:r give way. =Rather along the: the: the: the: the: the Heath line.=So I think that the possibility of .hhh having Thousands of people laid off in the Midlands which is a very .hh volatile area I think=(an) area where disagreeable things can easily happen.=Birmingham.=Think of that (.) awful place. .hhh e:rr The thought of all those British Leyland workers running rampage. I think that she would probably give way like Heath did.  
Int: I shall...(continues)

(45) (WW:25.3.79)

Int: .hh Mister Watkins er- do you agree with that, a sort of fa:talism has overcome the government and the wheeling and dealing has stopped, is that right?  
AW: e:r I would say fatalism has overcome about (.) roughly half the cabinet, .hh e:r represented if you like by Merlin Rees who very honourably I think I don't think it was a gaffe at all said no we're going to lose. .hhh Other people are slightly more confident, .hhh e::r (0.2) U- not very much so but (0.3) U- fatalism doesn't only mean .h we're going to lose, it also means well we've had enough of this what is there to do. .hh uhm This is particularly so I believe in the junior (.) ranks of the government, .hh and also uhm among backbenchers .h and they are pretty fed up now. There are people of course like Michael Foot like Stan Orme .hh er that are examples you could choose who say well .hh Attlee made this terrible mistake in nineteen fifty-one of going to the country, .hh er but after all Attlee had an absolute majority and it wasn't quite the same. .hh e:r  
But e::r u:h I would say that there- that thu- there is a certain fatalism in .hh one half of the government.  
Int: But this is...(continues)

In conclusion, the design of turns and the management of turn size in news interview contexts is strongly influenced by the general expectation that interviewees' answers should or will appropriately be extended. In fulfilling this expectation, interviewees employ a range of procedures which are directed to projecting clear completion points for their turns. In part, the value of these projections derives from the fact that they help to secure interviewees against the possibility of their being pressurised into making further and undesired elaborations to their answers due to ensuing gaps being hearable as 'belonging to' them. Thus, in projecting clear completion points for their turns, interviewees provide for any gaps which occur subsequent to those points being attributed (by the broadcast audience) not to their having ceased talking in the midst of an extended answer, but rather to delayed turn initiation on the part of an interviewer.

Finally it may be added here that some of the procedures through which clear completion points for answers may be projected can also be of value to interviewees in that they operate to prevent an interviewer from treating a turn as complete at a point at which an interviewee does not wish to relinquish the floor. This is so, for example, in the case of the procedure discussed in relation to (41) above.

#### 4.5 Concluding Remarks

Although, as seen in Chapter 2, styles of news interviewing have undergone considerable change and evolution since the breaking of the BBC's monopoly, an examination of archival materials indicates that the structure of the news interview turn-taking system per se has remained unchanged since the earliest days of broadcasting in the United Kingdom.



One reason for this would seem to be that, as presently constituted, this system places constraints on interviewers' turns which provide for interviewers maintaining the stance of neutrality which has been legally required of broadcast journalists since the inception of the BBC in the 1920s. Thus, by specifying that interviewers should manage whatever activities they undertake in and through turns that are minimally recognisable as questions, the current news interview turn-taking system does not provide for an interviewer proposing any overt commitment to the truth or adequacy of an interviewee's answers through the production of straightforward assessments, challenges, news receipts or newsmarks. Rather it provides for an interviewer taking up and maintaining the 'footing' (Goffman, 1981) of an 'impartial' questioner: that is, the footing of a questioner who refrains from adopting overt positions with respect to the content of the answers he elicits.

Here, then, we can begin to get some sense of why it might be that interviewers breach the normative question-answer format far less frequently than do interviewees. For it clearly follows from these considerations that any violation of the constraint that interviewers should confine themselves to asking questions carries with it the possibility that an interviewer's legally required posture of formal neutrality will be undermined.

In conclusion, it would seem likely that for so long as the broadcasting institutions are required by law to maintain a neutral posture in their coverage of news and current affairs, the British news interview turn-taking system will remain as described in the present chapter: thus permitting interviewers to counter accusations of interviewer bias with the argument that, since they only ask questions,

they cannot 'strictly speaking' be guilty of adopting standpoints or expressing opinions.

Footnotes to Chapter Four

1. For the original exposition of this standpoint, see Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974: 729-731).
2. The transcription symbols used in the data extracts in this dissertation are explained in the appendix.
3. The systematic absence of these activities in news interview interaction, as well as in a range of other forms of institutional interaction, has been well discussed by Heritage (1980, 1984a, 1984b, 1985a), and this section draws extensively on his work. Further consideration of this matter can also be found in Atkinson (1982).
4. Heritage argues that by withholding continuers and other receipt objects interviewers "decline the role of report recipient while maintaining the role of report elicitor" (Heritage, 1985a: 100). In this way he suggests, interviewers maintain a stance which permits the audience to "view themselves as the primary, if unaddressed recipients of the talk that emerges" (ibid). It would thus appear that the news interview turn-taking system is designed so as to identify the talk that it organises as produced for the consumption of overhearing third parties.
5. The first of these *phenomena will be addressed in the concluding remarks* which follow this section.

## Chapter Five

### ASPECTS OF TOPICAL ORGANISATION IN NEWS INTERVIEWS

#### 5.1 Introduction

As noted, the news interview turn-taking system requires that interviewees confine themselves to answering interviewers' questions. One consequence of this is that it effectively restricts the right to manage the organisation of topic to interviewers. However, despite this aspect of the news interview turn-taking system's operation, we find in practice that the topical development of news interview interaction is often significantly influenced by interviewees.

Against this background, we begin the present chapter by considering some sequences in which interviewers produce supplementary questions: that is, questions which by definition maintain or pursue some aspect of a topic or topical line that is already in play. In so doing, we first differentiate this class of questions from a number of other basic question-types, and then describe some of their standard uses in news interview contexts.

Following this examination of supplementary questioning, we turn to consider some cases in which interviewees breach the normative organisation of news interview interaction in order to try and exert some degree of control over the topical focus of their talk.

#### 5.2 Supplementary Questioning

##### 5.2.1 An initial characterisation of supplementary questions

Supplementary questions exhibit three basic properties which combine to differentiate them from other types of questions. These properties concern their sequential positioning, the identity of their recipients,

and their topical relationship with the talk that they follow. Thus, in brief, supplementary questions are (1) produced following a response to a prior question, (2) addressed to the author of that response, and (3) built off, or on to, the talk (i.e. the response) which precedes them.

With respect to the relationship between supplementaries and the responses on to which they are built, we may offer two preliminary observations. The first is that, in producing a supplementary question, a questioner may either (1) progress a topical line of the preceding response or (2) take up and deal with some aspect of that response. An example of a supplementary which progresses a topical line is located in (1) where an interviewer produces such a question in response to an answer which has involved a Labour Party defence spokesman asserting that the failure of the chairman to call him to speak during a (Labour Party Conference) debate on defence was intentional.

(1) (NW:30.9.81)

Int: Was it intentional not to call you?

BJ: 'hhh Weil i- (.) I don't think it was mali::gn=but it was intentional in the sense that he referred at the e:nd to the fact that I had put in a note asking to be called, 'hh and couldn't be called.=So it obviously was intentional. =It wasn't 'hh an ove:rsight on his part. (0.2)

Int: → What sort of intention was it then.=What lay behind it.

BJ: I think that what he...(continues)

Here, then, the interviewer's supplementary advances the topical line of the spokesman's prior talk by requesting that he specify the intention which "lay behind" the chairman's action.

An example of a supplementary which takes up and deals with some aspect of a prior response can be seen in (2) in which a prominent businessman is being interviewed about an instance in which Prince Charles expressed the opinion that a significant number of British managers do not communicate adequately with their workforce.

(2) (WAO:22.2.79)

((Preamble: I asked Sir Richard Marsh (...) whether he was surprised at the hullabaloo over what Prince Charles said about the need for better communicating by British managers.))

RM: I'm not surprised about it because (.) er 'hh if you're one of the ro:yals I mean part of the responsibility is that when you make daft statements they get enormous publicity.=

Int: → =Why d'you say it's a daft statement.=

RM: =Oh I mean you can't...(continues)

Thus here the interviewer's supplementary does not (as in (1)) operate to progress the topical line of the response which precedes it. Rather it preserves an element of that response as a focus for further talk: requesting that the interviewee provide grounds for, and thus justify, his characterisation of Prince Charles' remarks as "daft statements".

Our second observation concerning the relationship of supplementary questions to the responses on to which they are built is that they may or may not be designed so as to presuppose the adequacy of those responses. Thus, for example, whereas the supplementary in (1) presupposes the adequacy of the viewpoint expressed in and through the response that it follows, the supplementary in (2) clearly does not do so. For while the former presupposes that the chairman's referenced action was (as the spokesman has asserted) "intentional", the latter does not presuppose that Prince Charles' remarks were (as the businessman has asserted) "daft statements".

### 5.2.2 A brief consideration of some alternative types of questions

In order to get a sense of the distinctiveness of supplementaries from other sorts of questions, it will be useful to briefly consider some question-types which stand in contrast to them.

A first class of questions which may be set apart from supplementaries are those which are not produced following a question-response

sequence. In news interviews such questions can only properly occur in first turns, where they involve an interviewer establishing a first topic to be talked to:

(3) (AP:7.3.79)

Int: → ...But first (0.3) let's hear from Ju:ne Rogers,=who has launched her own campaign for victims rights, 'hhh a campai:gn (.) sparked off by the death (.) of her son a year ago. 'hhh Mrs Rogers (.) what happened to your son. (.)

JR: 'hhh e:r Well he was having a...(continues)

However, because the normative question-answer format is on occasion breached, in practice questions which exhibit the property of not being produced following a question-response sequence also occur after segments of violative talk. Thus, for example, in (4) the interviewer produces a question not after a question-response sequence, but after a series of turn-type/turn order violations which have involved two interviewees arguing about whether or not council tenants should have the right to buy the houses or flats in which they live.<sup>1</sup>

(4) (LRC:20.10.80:Simplified)

TD: ...not just modern one: [s.]  
[B] ut how many  
DW: flats have been sold off.  
TD: And may I say you can [si-'hh woul [d- ( )]  
DW: [H o ]w many flats  
ha v e ] been sold off,=es pecially those flats in ] multi=  
TD: [(Well)] So because ( )-]  
DW: =sto rey blocks ]  
TD: So be ] cause flats are=  
( ): =mhm=  
TD: =aren't selling well it means that people who live in council  
houses shouldn't have the right to bu y them, ] I don't see=  
DW: [ No ]  
TD: =the logic of th[at.]  
Int: → [Le-] Let's talk about the right to buy in  
terms of money thou:gh. er Some tenants not a great deal  
but some have found that the: 'hhh (.) offers of discounts  
are very attractive but when they get into the owning  
market as they do (.) they find that repairs are not  
discounted,=and that they're something they really can't  
handle. This is a growing problem isn't it.  
TD: 'hhh Well it...(continues)

A second class of questions which stand in contrast to supplementaries share with the latter not only the property of being produced after a response to a prior question, but also the property of being directed to the author of that response. These questions differ from supplementaries, however, in that they are not built off the response that they follow. An example of a question which is constructed in this fashion is observable in (5) where a member of the Scott Polar Research Institute is being interviewed about a group of four letters which Captain Oates wrote before embarking on the final stage of Scott's ill-fated Antarctic expedition. At the time of this interview, these letters (which had only recently come to light) were being offered to the Institute for three thousand pounds.

(5) (WAO:25.1.79:Simplified)

Int: 'hhh The main thing that one associates with Oates of course is i- his famous decision to walk out into the snow to his death. 'hhh Did the letters u- throw any new light o::n how he came to decide to do th [ at?]

HK: [Non]e.= Not at all. The last lette:r one of the most interesting was written 'hhh fro:m the:: polar plateau: 'hhh (.) a:nd it was probably one of the last letters written from the expedition before it finally disappeare:d 'hhh but in fact the contents are rather an anti-climax,=a lot of it is purely (.) domestic, and (.) certainly nothing was written at a later stage:,=everybody was too busy keeping ali::ve to write letters ho::me.  
(.)

Int: → 'hhh The (.) price being asked for these letters is (.) three thousand pou::nds. Are you going to be able to raise it,  
(.)

HK: At the moment it...(continues)

Thus although the interviewer's second question in this extract is (1) produced following a response to a prior question, and (2) addressed to the author of that response, it does not constitute a supplementary. For rather than building off the response that it follows, this question initiates a new topical line. That is, it shifts away from the issue of what was written in the letters, and focuses instead upon the issue



of whether the Research Institute is going to be able to afford the price which is being asked for them.

A final class of questions which may be differentiated from supplementaries are those which are produced following a response to a prior question, but which are not directed to that response's author. On some occasions, such questions, like the question-types discussed in relation to (5), involve a shift away from the topical focus of the response that they follow. On other occasions, however, they share with supplementaries the property of being built off, or on to, that response. Thus, for example, in the following case two leading political commentators are being interviewed a few days before a Labour Government is due to face a 'vote of (no) confidence' in the House of Commons.

(6) (WW:25.3.79)

Int: 'hhh Well gentlemen for the last few years (0.7) every few months (1.0) 'hh er pe- there's been fe:verish speculation that the government is about to fall. Now Mister Jenkins (.) 'h u- are they certain to lose this vote on Wednesday and fall.

PJ: hm Nothing is certain, but I think thise time yes the- the game is up. 'hhhh A kind of uhm (0.6) fatalism I think has uhm (0.5) come over the: Cabinet and over the Labour Party in the last few days, and I think that they expect to lose. 'hhh I think that the minority parties are all going to want to be 'h on the winning side on Wednesday night, and I'm not sure that you're right about the Welsh Nationalists,=I wouldn't be surprised to see them in the opposition lobby as well. 'hhh And I think the winning side will be the Conservative side.

Int: → 'hh Mister Watkins er- do you agree with that,=a sort of fa:talism has overcome the government and the wheeling and dealing has stopped, is that right?

AW: e::r I would say fatalism has overcome about (.) roughly half the Cabinet...(continues)

Here, in the course of responding to the interviewer's first question, the interviewee PJ asserts that "A kind of uhm (0.6) fatalism I think has uhm (0.5) come over the: Cabinet and over the Labour Party in the last few days". Subsequently, the interviewer produces a question which focuses upon this element of his response. However, despite

being thus built off the second part of a question-response sequence, this question does not constitute a supplementary. For, rather than being addressed to the author of the response off of which it is built (namely PK), it is directed to AW - providing this interviewee with an opportunity to agree/disagree with the statement that it has preserved as a topic for further talk.

Before proceeding to consider some of the types of interactional work which news interviewers regularly accomplish in and through the production of supplementaries, it should be noted that their non-supplementary questions do not always represent straightforward requests for information. Three examples which will serve to illustrate this point follow.

Our first example is the opening question from an interview with a Labour Minister of Agriculture.

(7) (WW:18.3.79)

((For some time, the Minister has been calling for a freeze on the prices paid for surplus agricultural produce within the Common Market.))

Int: 1 → Mister Silkin (.) no:w you've said that unle::ss you ca:n get a free::ze (.) on the: minimum price pai::d for the surplus produce 'hhh then you might be prepare:d er to (.) veto all (.) agricultural price increases (.) in the Market.

2 → 'hhh Now 'hhh is that really your position, =are you

3 → really that tough, (.) or are you just saying this because nineteen seventy nine happens to be election year.

JS: 'hhh 'hhh Well nineteen seventy nine may be...(continues)

Amongst other things, we find here an instance of a procedure which is widely used by investigative interviewers in a range of sequential environments. This procedure operates roughly as follows: an interviewer (1) formulates a statement which an interviewee has made in some other context, and then (2) produces a question which can be heard to be directed to undermining that statement. Thus in (7) the interviewer

opens his interview with the Minister by doing at least three things. First (1→), he formulates the gist of the Minister's warning to Britain's EEC partners that he will block all agricultural price rises within the Community unless they agree to freeze the minimum price paid for surplus agricultural produce ("Mister Silkin (.) no:w you've said..."). Second (2→), he produces two questioning turn components ("Now 'hhh is that really your position,=are you really that tough") which propose that the Minister may be expressing a stronger opinion than he is in practice prepared to adopt. Finally (3→), through the production of a third questioning component ("or are you just saying this because nineteen seventy nine happens to be election year"), he offers a possible motive for the Minister having expressed such an opinion.

In sum, then, in opening his interview with the Minister, the interviewer produces a question whose component parts combine to imply that the Minister's warning may be nothing more than an empty threat, issued primarily with a view to impressing the British electorate.

Our second example is produced after a two-part sequence of violative talk. This talk is focused upon the outcome of a preceding exchange during which the interviewer has been attempting to press the interviewee into stating unequivocally whether he intends to stand as a candidate in his union's next presidential election.

(8) (WAO:13.3.79)

Int: 'hhh (.) Well I've got you that far anyway.  
AS: Of course.  
Int: → 'hhh er What's the difference between your Marxism and Mister McGarhey's Communism.  
AS: 'hh er The difference is that it's the press that constantly call me a Ma:rxist when I do not, (.) and never have...(continues)

With his question the interviewer shifts topic to focus upon the political positions of the interviewee and another possible contender

for the union's presidency (MM). This question presupposes first that the interviewee is a Marxist, and second that MM is a Communist. However, while the latter is an avowed Communist, the interviewee has publically denied that he is a Marxist (a label which certain sections of the press have repeatedly sought to attach to him) on numerous occasions. Against this background, then, the interviewer's question is hearably hostile. For it places the interviewee in the position of having to challenge one of its presuppositions if he is to distance himself from the Marxist tag. That is, the question is constructed in such a way that the interviewee is in effect obliged to produce something other than an answer in responding to it.

Our final example, which occurs after a question-response sequence, is directed to an interviewee who has yet to answer a question. The problem to which it refers concerns the low amounts of money which the West Midlands receives from the EEC's regional fund.

(9) (LRC:20.10.80)

JT: ...the Midla:nds complaint should be (.) firmly directed where it belo:ngs (.) straight at Whiteha:ll which has contro::l 'hh over which parts of the UK get what (.) Euro money.

Int: → 'hh Well Gordon Morgan leader of the: Labour Group on West Midlands County Council this problem has been going on for a long whi::le,=why haven't you (.) been calling out for a change: (.) earlier,=perhaps under a Labour Government. (0.4)

GM: Indeed we did...(continues)

Here the interviewer addresses a question to a Labour politician whose complaints about the deal which the West Midlands gets from the EEC's regional fund have been widely reported. In constructing this question, the interviewer (1) asserts that the problem (about which the politician has been complaining) has "been going on for a long whi:le", and then (2) asks the politician to account for his not having called "out for a change: (.) earlier,=perhaps under a Labour Government". Thus (1),

because it presupposes that he has only recently "been calling out for a change:", this question places the politician in the position of having to challenge one of its presuppositions if he wishes to argue to the contrary. Moreover (2), because it more specifically presupposes that he did not speak out when a Labour Government was in office, it can also be heard to imply that he may have kept quiet about the problem for so long as it could be laid at the door of his own political party. Here, then, as in (7) and (8), an interviewer produces a non-supplementary question which clearly cannot be characterised as a straightforward request for information.

With these various considerations to hand, we may now proceed to describe some standard uses of supplementary questions in news interview contexts.

### 5.2.3 Some standard uses of supplementary questions

#### 5.2.3.1 Probing

On occasion, interviewers use supplementaries to probe, test or otherwise solicit supportive detailing for interviewees' statements and arguments. One of the procedures through which this type of work is regularly accomplished involves interviewers in producing supplementaries which request that an interviewee elaborate upon, or substantiate, some aspect of a preceding response. Thus, for example, in (10) the Labour Party's spokesman on Northern Ireland (DC) is being interviewed about his party's commitment to the re-unification of Ireland.

(10) (NN:29.9.81)

Int: It's not something you're going to force on the Northern Ireland people.  
DC: er You can't force: (.) nu- force coercion (0.2) same as I said same as Alex Kitson said is no part of our language. 'hhh This has got to be done by consent. (.) We've got to win that consent.

Int: → Well let me press you again,=but what does consent really  
mea::n.  
DC: Consent really means at the end of the day that the people  
of Northern Ireland which means of course a million  
Protestants 'hh have had their fe::ars (0.7) and e::r  
and (0.2) worries if you like removed.

Here, in his first answer, DC confirms that the Labour Party does not intend to impose re-unification on the people of Northern Ireland, and then proposes that this goal can only be achieved "by consent". Subsequently, however, the interviewer, having explicitly attended to the fact that he is about to engage in something more than the straightfoward solicitation of information ("Well let me press you again"), probes the Labour Party's described position by asking DC to spell out just what is meant by consent ("but what does consent really mea::n. ").

Another example of this type of questioning occurs in (11) in which a newspaper editor is being interviewed about his proposal that Western countries should demonstrate their concern over the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan by ceasing to supply the Soviets with advanced technology.

(11) (WAO:18.1.80)

1 Int: ...'hh Can you expect countries to take an action which  
2 might hurt the:m 'h more than the Russians, 'hh and which  
3 might in the long term have very little if no affect at all?  
4 RM: That's the argument that the candidates opposed to President  
5 (.) Carter put in the Iowa primary.  
.  
.  
.  
((13 lines omitted))  
.  
19 Well (.) countries are falling to the Soviet Union no:was  
20 a result of ingressio- er- aggression 'hhh at the rate of  
21 one a yea::r. 'hh If you don't respo:nd you say to the Soviet  
22 Union we give you a green light, (.) here's a little country  
23 we don't bother about,=as we (0.2) reacted over Czechoslovakia  
24 in 'hh nineteen thirty eight. 'hhh er We let it go. (0.2)  
25 'hhh A:nd er naturally the Soviet Union will then think 'hh  
26 well if they don't mi::nd (.) we'll take another one.  
27 Int: → You say countries are foring-fallin' at the rate of one a  
28 yea::r. =What other countries and for how many years.  
29 (0.5)

30 RM: er That's right. = If you look at the li:st, er Mozambique  
 31 Angola Ethiopia 'hhh e::r Ade::n 'h u-even recently e:r ( )-  
 32 Grenada, 'hhh u::hm it's er bee:n one a year in the second  
 33 half of the nineteen seventies.

Here, in the course of answering the interviewer's question concerning the damage which his proposed sanctions might inflict on Western countries, the editor asserts that countries are falling under the influence of the Soviet Union "at the rate of one a yea::r" (lines 19-21). In the next turn, the interviewer first establishes this statement as a topic for further talk (lines 27-28), and then requests that the editor substantiate it (line 28). Thus here, as in (10), the interviewer clearly uses a supplementary question to probe an aspect of the interviewee's preceding response.

A second procedure for probing through the production of supplementaries involves the solicitation of an account for some aspect of an interviewee's reported actions, intentions, or opinions. A clear case of this kind of supplementary is observable in (12) in which a member of the Labour Party's National Executive Committee is being interviewed about the NEC's publication of a manifesto for the 1979 European elections: a manifesto which, contrary to the declared policy of the Labour Government, threatens the possibility of Britain's withdrawal from the Common Market if it is not radically reformed.

(12) (WAO:25.1.79)

Int: Mister Heffer it has been suggested that under clause eight of the Labour Party constitution that the NEC is bound to confer with the Parliamentary Labour Party 'hhhh where ever 'h relating to the work and progress (.) of the Party. 'hhh Now (.) 'hh is the: party's European Manifesto not such a matte::r, 'hh er clearly calling for such consultation 'h which indeed the chairman of the Parliamentary party 'hhh has in fact asked for.  
 EH: And we have agreed.(.) We have agreed that once 'hh having actually agreed the terms of the manifesto 'hh that we shall now consult 'hhh with the: er chairman and any other people of the Parliamentary Labour Party 'hhh that

wishes to consult us, No:w=  
Int: → =But wh[y] didn't you publish it as a dra:ft manifesto if=  
EH:        a-  
Int:        =there's going to be consultation about it rather than  
            as a manifesto?  
EH:        Be:cau:se: we had to have a deadli:ne. And the deadline  
            had been agreed some long time back 'hhh that it had  
            got to be cleare:d by the: 'hh er January 'hh National  
            Executive Committee.  
            ((Interview cut))

In his first question in this extract, the interviewer addresses the issue of whether the NEC is not "bound" by the Labour Party constitution to "confer with the Parliamentary Labour Party" on matters such as the drafting of the manifesto under discussion. This question is hearably provocative in at least two senses. First, it proposes that such consultations have not taken place, and that thus the NEC, on whose behalf EH is speaking, may be guilty of violating a constitutional obligation. Second, given that a significant proportion of the PLP are known to strongly oppose Britain's withdrawal from the Common Market, it can be further heard to imply that the NEC (a majority of whose *members* are avowed anti-marketeers) may have purposefully ignored that obligation in order to avoid having to weaken, if not jetison, the threat of withdrawal in response to pressure from the pro-market lobby within the PLP.

In his response to this question, EH subsequently rejects the implication of malpractice, stating that the NEC has agreed to consult with the PLP, and that that consultation will take place now that "the terms of the manifesto" have been formulated. Rather than accepting this response, however, the interviewer goes on to produce a supplementary which solicits an account for the NEC's decision to publish a manifesto proper (rather than a draft manifesto) prior to any consultation with the PLP. In so doing, he pursues the earlier focus on the possibility



that the NEC may have circumvented an aspect of the Labour Party's constitution: the implication now being that if they had been truly abiding by the spirit of the constitution they would have published a draft manifesto, thus allowing for changes to be made as a result of consultation; whereas, as it is, the publication of the manifesto proper means that the PLP, and in particular the pro-marketeters in its ranks, will not be able to exert much (if any) influence over its content.

In this instance, then, the actions of the NEC, as described by their spokesman, EH, are probed through the production of a supplementary which solicits an account for an aspect of those actions which does not appear to be consistent with what EH has implicated in his prior response: namely, that the NEC are abiding by the Labour Party's constitution, and thus have not been guilty of avoiding consultations with the PLP in order to ensure that the Labour Party's European Manifesto includes their preferred policy re. Britain's membership of the Common Market.

Another example can be seen in (13) in which the president of the National Graphical Association is being interviewed about his union's attitude towards the introduction of new technology into Fleet Street's composing rooms. Thus here the interviewer's supplementary (line 14) solicits an account for the state of affairs referred to by the interviewee in the final element (lines 11-13) of his response to the first question in the extract.

(13) (E:7.7.80)

1 Int: ...Let's just clarify this, 'h that means that the Times  
2 wanted journali:sts  
3 (.)  
4 LD: Ye[s.]  
5 Int: [and telly-add girls to have access to these computers.=

6 LD: =That's right. (0.5) And we said no. (.) Not at this stage of  
 7 the game:. Certainly we're not opposed to the new technology,  
 8 'h in fact e::r 'hh I would say that ninety-nine per cent of  
 9 the provincial press (.) is now over to new technology. There's  
 10 very little hot metal left in the provincial field, =very little  
 11 indeed, (.) 'hh but certainly we haven't agreed to er hand over  
 12 completely, er you know the question of key boarding er to  
 13 journalists or to the: telly-advertisement girls.=  
 14 Int: → =Now why are you so reluctant to do that.  
 15 LD: Well we're ha- having to protect our people's employment...  
 (continues)

(For a third example of a supplementary which accomplishes the work of probing by means of soliciting an account, see (2).)

A third procedure through which interviewers regularly probe interviewees' statements and arguments involves the production of hypothetical questions. Thus, for example, a hypothetical question is used to this end in (14).

(14) (NN:14.10.81)

((Preamble - following the transmission of excerpts from a speech made by the interviewee: Sharp though the diagnosis was, many felt Sir Ian left the real political questions unanswered. If the present (economic) policies are so ruinous, what is he going to do about it?))

IG: Well the argument will continue:. (.) But I think e::r  
 (.) events are on my side.  
 Int: In what sense.  
 IG: Well the present policies are not worki:ng.=They are:  
 (.) having a very bad serious effect on industry,=to  
 say nothing of the unemployed, 'hhh er and I believe the  
 pressures will bring about a change:.  
 Int: → Supposing Sir Geoffrey ((the Chancellor of the Exchequer))  
doesn't change them,=and he said he wasn't going to  
 this afternoon,=at what stage do you really have to  
do something, 'hh about policies that you've said are  
 disa:sterous.  
 (0.2)  
 IG: We:ll we'd have to see:.=But e:rm (.) my own belief  
 is that the- that there will be change.=Because I regard  
 the present policies as quite unsustainable.

Here a leading Conservative MP (IG) is being interviewed at a time when he has been calling on a Conservative government to change its economic policies. At the beginning of the extract (see preamble),

he is asked to spell out what he intends to do about bringing about such a change. In responding to this question, he avoids producing the requested statement of intent, proposing instead that "the argument will continue:" and that "events are on my side".<sup>2</sup> Following this somewhat indirect response, the interviewer solicits a clarification of IG's latter proposal. In duly clarifying this aspect of his preceding response, IG then asserts that it is his opinion that pressure resulting from the (proposed) failure of the current policies will force the government to change direction. In so doing, he thus clearly implies that it will not be necessary for him to take action against the government.

Rather than opting to let the matter rest here, however, the interviewer proceeds to probe IG's position. The interviewer accomplishes this task as follows. First, he formulates a hypothetical situation in which the present policies are not changed (warranting this supposition with a report of a statement of intent by the Chancellor). Second, he asks IG to state at what stage he would feel compelled to act in this context. Thus the interviewer produces a supplementary which probes IG's position in that it is directed to revealing the stage at which he will be prepared to act if, contrary to his expectations, pressures from other sources do not bring about the change he desires, and thus forestall the need for action on his part.

Another example of an interviewer using a hypothetical question to probe an interviewee's position is located in (15). In this extract a leading member of the Social Democratic Party is being questioned on the issue of how the SDP and the Liberal Party, who have recently formed an electoral alliance, will decide which Party's candidates will

fight which parliamentary seats at the next General Election.

(15) (NN:16.9.81)

Int: Now if there is disagreement at a local leve:l, if (.) the local party the local Liberal Party simply- or the local SDP 'h simply refuse: to give up that seat to the other party and you think that's a good idea:, 'hhh (.) What do you think should be done. David Stee:l seems to favour some kind of mediation or independent arbitration,=is that enough?  
(0.7)

BR: Well what I would like to see is roughly this. 'hh That there are: about six hundred seats to be talked about. 'hh We should have negotiation at region(al) leve:l, with representatives not o:nly of the centre: 'hh but and I take this point entirely it was very plainly said this morning at the Liberal Assembly 'hhhwith representatives of the: Liberal and Social Democratic Parties in every constituency. 'hh You have negotiations at regional level, 'hh and we would then seek to agree on how to divi:de those six hundred seats. 'hh I think we would succeed i::::n two cases out of three,=in two thirds of those seats we would agree. 'hh e:rm After that we might have a little (.) bit of further discussion. 'hh But in the e:nd possibly an arbitration ( )-er b- arbitration procedure: e:r by which either- which both (.) parties would bind themselves too, the Liberals and the Social Democrats, 'h by which [ a decision ] would would=

Int: [But at what level]  
BR: =be made. 'h That arbitration decision would have to be made at a local er er local level. 'h But they would be national arbitrato:rs. 'hh We would agree on a pane:l, 'hh five: (.) seven (.) nine: people, 'hh and would say these: are the principle:s, 'h we cannot agree::, 'h we the Social Democrats we the Liberals 'h agree to be bound by what you the arbitrators decide, 'h they would go in (.) look at it, (.) and they (couldn't) comeba [ck ( ).]

Int: → [But supposing] that local party constituency Liberal Party doesn't accept that.

BR: Well then if they didn't accept it no doubt they would put up a Liberal candidate, 'h and he would not be either endorsed by the Alliance: collectively or endorsed by David Steel...(continues)

In his first block of talk, the interviewee details the procedures through which he believes the Parliamentary seats could be successfully allocated. In addressing the possibility of difficulties at a local level, he proposes that these could be overcome by the local Liberal and SDP branches agreeing to be bound by the decisions of a panel of national arbitrators. Rather than accepting this as stated, however,

the interviewer produces a supplementary which requests that the interviewee explain how matters could be resolved if, hypothetically, a Liberal Constituency Party refused to be bound in the proposed way. That is, the interviewer probes the interviewee's position by soliciting a proposal concerning what should be done in the event of the procedures he has described not being accepted at a local level.

#### 5.2.3.2 Countering

On occasion, interviewers produce supplementaries which can be heard to be directed to *undermining an interviewee's statements* in a prior turn ( or series of turns). One procedure that they regularly utilise in undertaking this type of work involves the production of questions which cast doubt upon an interviewee's preceding assertions. Thus, for example, in responding to the interviewer's first question in (16), the editor of a Fleet Street newspaper asserts that his newspaper's composing room is "moving over to new technology". Subsequently, however, the interviewer produces a supplementary question ("But are you") which, because it suggests that this may not in fact be the case, hearably implies some doubt about the adequacy of his response.

(16) (E:7.7.80: Simplified)

- Int: Are you ready for the new technology in the composing room. (0.8)  
WD: Well the newspaper's moving over to new technology.  
Int: → But are you,  
WD: Yes er ( ) we (are) ready to do this, we're rar-  
we've been building ever since I started...(continues)

An interviewer's supplementary question similarly conveys a degree of doubt in (17) which opens with a Minister of Agriculture completing a turn in which he has been (re)-stating that he will veto all agricultural price increases within the EEC if, as is expected, other member

states oppose the UK government's call for a freeze on the prices paid for surplus (agricultural) produce.

(17) (WW:18.3.79)

- JS: ...there were things that were essential for the country 'hh which otherwise might have disappeared. This year there is nothing of ours that looks as though it's about to be destroyed, 'hhh so I'm capable of taking what I believe to be 'hh a- a total view of the position.
- Int: → Is that really a realistic posture.  
(0.2)'
- JS: Yes it i:s because the: alternative: is a- an absolutely impossible one...(continues)

Here the interviewer's supplementary can be heard to throw doubt upon the Minister's prior statements in that it proposes that the course of action he has been describing may not, in practice, be a realistic one.<sup>3</sup>

A second, somewhat more common, procedure through which interviewers may call into question the adequacy of an interviewee's preceding response involves the production of supplementaries which can be characterised as third turn counters or 'challenges'. As was noted in the previous chapter, such counters are routinely accomplished in and through (statement) + (tag question/question) turns. An instance of this kind of supplementary is the following:

(18) (NAO:9.3.79)

- 1 Int: Well a lot of people have a history of disagreements  
2 with Mister Heath.=er Why should that disqualify them  
3 from public office.
- 4 GR: Well I- I quoted the circumstances in which the disagreement  
5 arose. 'hhh er It's also very noticeable looking at  
6 the list of appointments and we've spoken about the  
7 appointments as a whole: 'hhh that there's a bias towards  
8 people who've been associated with the trade union  
9 movement itself, 'hh or with er rather academic aspects  
10 of industrial relations, 'hh and there's an apparent  
11 absence of er employers who might be called upon to  
12 (.) pay 'hh monies 'h er that are recommended.
- 13 Int: → Well there's er mis- Sir- Sir- Sir William Ryland u-  
14 formerly chairman of the Post Of[ice, there's Mister ]=  
15 GR: [Well- formerly chairman]

16 Int: =Gibson of- of- of=BP, are [the] se people unfitted  
 17 GR: [Well]  
 18 Int: to sit in judgement on these=matters,  
 19 GR: Well I- I- = I- -I- the word unfitted  
 20 i-is-is-is perhaps a strong word to use, but after  
 21 all Sir William Ryland is a former 'hh chairman o-of-of  
 22 the Post Office,=he's not responsible any longer for  
 23 the payment of the money. 'hhh And Mister Gibson is  
 24 the personnel (.) 'hh er- er manage:r.=I would have  
 25 liked to have seen 'hh er some people o-on that body  
 26 who er have had some experience of the need to make  
 27 the profits, or to create the wealth necessary to finance  
 28 the settlement.

In this extract, GR is being interviewed about his objections to the appointments to a Pay Commission. In his response to the interviewer's question at lines 1-3, he asserts as one of his objections that employers do not appear to be amongst those whose interests are represented in the list of appointments (lines 10-11). Rather than producing a subsequent question which presupposes the adequacy of this statement, however, the interviewer (1) furnishes materials which may be heard to be directed to undermining/countering it (lines 13-14 and 16), and then (2) produces a questioning component (lines 16 and 18) which retroactively formulates these materials as a question preface. In short, the interviewer here 'challenges' an aspect of the interviewee's response in and through the production of a (preface) + (question) formatted supplementary question.<sup>4</sup>

A supplementary is put to a similar use in (19) in which AW is one of two journalists being interviewed about an instance in which a leading member of the government of the day has breached the principle of collective Cabinet responsibility.

(19) (WAO:14.2.79)

((The Minister in question has spoken out against Cabinet policies on several previous occasions.))

1 Int: 'hhh Alan Watkins do you think he's gone further this  
 2 time than before.

3     AW:            er No I can't see that he's gone very much further:r  
4                    than on previous occasions.=I don't think it's quite  
5                    as simple with respect as David Wood 'hhh says it is,  
6                    'hhhh because e:rm Ministers have been pretty disloya:l  
7                    erm 'hhh in the: e:r nineteenth century and the eighteenth  
8                    century.=In the nineteenth century particularly when  
9                    the principle of cu- of collective responsibility beca:me  
10                   e::r 'hhhh a- accepted. And today 'hh we all know  
11                   tha- that the- the three of us know that Ministers  
12                   go round saying 'hh at dinner partie:s 'hh erm at ba::rs  
13                   'hh in restaurants.  
14     Int:         →                    That is if I may say so quite different  
15                   isn't [it,]  
16     AW:           [er] Well it- it- e:r aftera:ll the NEC is not  
17                   a public body...(continues)

At lines 10-13 of his response to the interviewer's first question, AW begins to construct an analogy between the conduct of the Minister and that of his peers at dinner parties, bars, and restaurants. Before he has finished drawing this analogy, however, the interviewer (1) intercepts his turn (line 14), (2) produces a counter assertion ("That is if I may say so quite different"), and then (3) retrospectively formulates this counter assertion as the first component in a (statement) + (tag question) turn ("isn't it"). Thus here, as in (18), an interviewer produces a supplementary which is directed to 'challenging' an interviewee's prior statement.

A final point concerning this use of supplementaries is that interviewers sometimes produce counters or 'challenges' to interviewees' statements and arguments on behalf of non-present third parties. Thus, for example, in (20) the interviewer furnishes a formulation of the government's position as an alternative to EM's view that due to widespread industrial unrest a state of emergency should be declared.

(20)       (WAO:25.1.79)

EM:                ...and when I talk about state of emergency 'hh apart  
                    from the powers you may get or may not even use, but  
                    it is 'hhh is a feeling that you've acted, and that  
                    there is someho:w 'h a government and- er in office  
                    that care:.



- Int: → But e:r the government are saying and I paraphrase their argument that this could be an empty measure:, 'hhhh er a panic measure which is not er 'hh yet er absolutely necessary, and could make things worse by provoking the: er 'hhhh trade unions,  
 EM: Well you see I don't accept that...(continues)

And, for example, in (21) NK's assertion that his political party represents "the only alternative government" is countered by the interviewer through the production of a formulation of the standpoint of the Social Democrats on this matter.

(21) (DP:27.9.81)

- Int: 'h How can it be otherwise if the result is 'hhhh=  
 NK: =Because of the: [because of-]  
 Int: [almost a] dead heat.  
 NK: Because of the seriousness of the position. 'hhhThe fate of the people of this country,=and the fact that we're the only alternative government.=And they've gotta let that transcend 'hh [any] contest that they have among  
 Int: [ ( ) ]  
 NK: themselves.=  
 Int: → =There will be quite a lot of Social Democrats watching who will say that the: 'hh you are not the only alternative government.  
 NK: Well I hahu you don't expect me to say anything good about the Social Democrats.=There's nothing good to say about them. (.) I mean they're not an alternative government...(continues)

It is noteworthy that in employing this procedure, interviewers often design their turns such that their status as questions may be open to doubt. This is the case, for example, in both (20) and (21) above.<sup>5</sup> However, irrespective of this consideration, interviewers maintain a posture of formal neutrality in such cases by virtue of the fact that they produce their counters on someone else's behalf. Against this background, then, it can be suggested that a constraint which generally militates against the initiation of breaches by interviewers (namely, the possibility that the production of non-questioning turns may compromise their legally required stance of formal neutrality) is somewhat relaxed in the context of counters or challenges which

are produced on behalf of someone else.

### 5.2.3.3 Pursuing

In the event of their not answering interviewers' questions, interviewees may undertake a range of activities. For example, they may account for the absence of an answer by asserting a lack of information, as in (22).

(22) (WAO:13.2.79)

Int: But do you deny that some (.) teachers particularly in the London area 'hhh are behaving in a way which is prejudicial to the interest of the children by being more: interested in the politics of the strikers' cau:se than the problems 'hh of the children.

FJ: → Well I can't deny or confirm it until I receive the evidence that you tell me I'm going to get tomorrow.

Or they may challenge (or deny) the relevance of a question, as in (23).

(23) (O:21.4.81)

Int: D'you quite like him?

EH: → 'hhhh Well er I- I *think in politics* you see: i- it's not a question of going about liking people or no:t, it's a question of dealing with people. 'hh And e:r I've always been able to deal perfectly well with Mister Wilson and er- indeed he has with me.

Or again, they may reject a presupposition of a question, as in (24).

(24) (LRC:20.10.80)

Int: Tony Beaumont-Dark should local authorities be forced to sell.

TD: → 'hh Well they're not being forced to se:ll.=

Alternatively, interviewees may overtly refuse to furnish an answer, as in (25).

(25) (NW:16.10.81)

Int: Were you consulted about the ultimatum before it was delivered.=

PJ: → =Well that's a matter er (.) I wouldn't want to comment on.

Or yet again, they may covertly decline to answer an interviewer's

question, as in (26).

(26) (WAO:13.2.79)

- Int: 'hhh But are you say::in Mister Jarvis that if schoo:ls  
are opened on a large scale=  
FJ: =( )-  
Int: 'hhhh erm 'hhh and (.) cleaning arrangements are ma:de  
perhaps you volunteer labour 'hhhh brought in that 'hh  
all your teachers will come in and teach,  
FJ: → The advice to our members is- if the school is ope:n  
erm and the working conditions are satisfactory that  
is to say there is cleaning there is heating and so o:n  
'hhh that they should do their normal work, but not  
undertake the work of anybody who is on strike. (.) 'h  
That is our advice to our members.  
Int: But di- mhm I didn't ask you what advice you were giving,  
do you think 'hh that they will in fact do s(h)o.  
FJ: Well we...(continues)

In the event of an interviewee engaging in one or other of these activities, an interviewer may subsequently opt to move on to a 'next' question, and thus accept the non-production of an answer. This is the case, for example, in (27) in which DS, in responding to the interviewer's question about the possibility of his voting "against the Finance Bill", accounts for the absence of an answer by first asserting a lack of information, and by then offering an account for that lack of information. Thus here the interviewer produces a subsequent question which, because it shifts topic to the issue of whether DS envisages further meetings with the Chancellor ("before...he gives his budget Speech"), tacitly presupposes the adequacy of DS's account for the non-production of an answer to the prior question concerning his voting intentions.

(27) (WAO:4.4.78)

- Int: 'hhh u- But are the kind of differences that still exist  
the kind of differences which 'hh e:r m- might make you  
vote against the Finance Bill.  
DS: Well that I don't know erm I think we have to wait and  
see::,=in fact er it's not going to be possible to give 'hh  
hard answers to these questions in advance of the budget  
itself. 'hhh Clearly it would be improper for the Chancellor

to tell us exactly what he was going to do in the budget,= and he: hasn't done so.=And nor should he do so.

Int: → 'hhh Is it likely that you will be having further meeti:ngs with the Chancellor before next Tuesday when he gives his budget speech in the House.

DS: I never rule that out...(continues)

A similar process is observable in (28) in which MF overtly refuses to answer the interviewer's question concerning what job he has in mind for Tony Benn, and then proceeds to talk instead to the less specific issue of whether it is likely that Benn will be offered a job. Thus here the interviewer produces a next question which, in shifting away from the issue of job allocation, tacitly accepts MF's refusal to answer the prior question on that topic.

(28) (TVE:1981)

Int: What job do you see [for Tony Benn?]

MF: ['hhh Well erm] I'm not ur- hhhh  
o(h)n this programme going to 'hhh allocate the jobs,= but of course if Tony Benn is elected to the: 'hhh Shadow Cabinet as I hope he- he will be 'hh er of course he would have to ha- be: offered er some jo:b 'hh er in the Shadow Cabinet,=and er 'hh I'd be very happy to do that,=and I hope that that will occur.

Int: → Have you had the opportunity to speak to him personally since the vote, 'hhh and (...) has he given you any idea of his intentions, will he [sta]nd next year,=

MF: [No,]

Int: = [and is] the party to go through all this agon [y again.

MF: = [I haven't] [I haven't-  
I haven't (.) yet had a:ny...(continues)

While interviewers may thus produce questions which implicitly accept the non-production of answers, they may also opt to take an alternative course of action. Specifically, they may pursue the matter. Thus a third major use for supplementary questions in news interviews is as a means of pursuing in the context of the non-production of answers.

A case in which supplementaries are used to this end is the following in which Prime Minister Thatcher is being interviewed just after the re-taking of South Georgia during the Falkland's war.

(29) (P:27.4.82)

1 Int: 'hhh If this u- military actio:n e:r for South Georgia  
2 was designed to spur negotiations o:n er as you say  
3 how long will you give Argentina 'hh to respond before  
4 you have to take the next (.) military step.  
5 MT: 'hhhh (.) One thing I was trying to (.) explain in  
6 the House this afternoo:n 'hh is that you can't just  
7 go on indefinitely with negotiations, some people say  
8 that 'hh don't use force (.) while the negotiations  
9 are continuing, 'hhh it's a very easy argument isn't  
10 it. 'hh It just enables the Argentinians to carry on  
11 negotiations on and on and o:n,=a perfectly easy 'hh plo:y,  
12 'hhh and in the mean ti:me 'hh it would get more and  
13 more difficult for us to use a military option 'hheight  
14 thousand miles away from home, 'hhh at the onset of  
15 Winter, (0.5) in very (0.5) terrible weather (.) gale:s  
16 (0.7) freezing (0.7) that would be their plo:y.  
17 Int: → So h[ow long no:w.]  
18 MT: [That could n]ot be so. 'hhh They've had three  
19 weeks. (0.7) Three weeks (0.2) in which to start to  
20 withdraw their forces, 'hhh three weeks in which to  
21 negotiate through Mister Haig. 'hhh We had to- to retake  
22 South Georgia at the best possible ti:me. 'hhhh I have  
23 to keep in mind the interests of our boy's 'hh who  
24 are on those warships (.) and our mari:nes, 'hhh I have  
25 to watch the safety of their lives 'hhh to see that  
26 they can succeed in doing whatever it is we decide  
27 they have to do 'hh at the best possible time. 'h And  
28 with the minimum risk to them.  
29 Int: → So how long will you give Arg[entina]  
30 MT: [Eve:ry] da:y (0.2) is  
31 important and has always been important to me. 'hhh  
32 Argentina's had over three weeks. 'hh We had to go:  
33 'h to recapture South Georgia at the best possible  
34 ti:me. 'hhhh (.) Al Haig has been saying time is getting  
35 short for some time,=it is. 'hh But you kn(h)ow 'hh (0.7)  
36 the whole situation would cha:nge 'hhh if when he sees  
37 Mister Haig tonight 'hhh he would agree to withdraw  
38 his forces from the Falklands, 'hh if on condition  
39 that when he had finished withdrawing his forces 'hhh our  
40 task force would withdraw. 'hhh Surely that would save  
41 their face:. (0.7) Their troops withdrew 'hh and then  
42 ours withdre:w, 'hh but there'd have to be some: guarantee  
43 of security for those islands. 'hhh And then we could  
44 resume negotiations. 'hh That's what the United Nation's  
45 resolution said. 'hhh That resolution in theory (0.2)  
46 has the force of international law. 'hhh But of course  
47 the United Nations has no means of enforcing it.=  
48 Int: → =So you can't say at the moment how long you will give  
49 Argentina [before we move a:gain,]  
50 MT: 'hhh No -of course I can't.  
51 And I should be very remiss if I were to give any hint 'hh  
52 because it would put the lives of some of our people  
53 at risk, and that I would never do.

With his first question (lines 1-4), the interviewer asks the PM to state how much time she will give to Argentina to adopt a new negotiating stance before she initiates "the next (.) military step". In responding to this question (lines 5-16), the PM, while intimating that the next military step will not be long in coming, clearly declines to furnish an answer. Moreover, since she does not overtly attend to the fact that she is not answering, she does so covertly, simply ignoring the topical agenda which was established for her turn by the interviewer's question. Subsequently, the interviewer pursues the matter by issuing a reformulation of his initial question (line 17): thus on the one hand displaying his understanding that the PM's prior talk does not constitute an answer, and on the other hand attempting to elicit the information which the PM has covertly declined to produce. It turns out, however, that this supplementary is largely overlapped by the PM who, in continuing with the line of talk she initiated prior to its production (lines 18-28), makes no attempt to respond to it. Thus, having already stated that the vulnerability of the task force means that Britain cannot afford to become embroiled in endless negotiations, she now goes on to make the case for further military action: asserting that the Argentinians have had ample time to start removing their forces, and that undue delay on the part of Britain in taking the next military step could increase the possibility of British servicemen losing their lives.

Having thus failed for a second time to elicit a statement of how long the PM will give the Argentinians to make a move on the negotiating front before she opts to initiate further military action, the interviewer once again produces a reformulated version of his initial question (line 29). Once again, however, the PM covertly refuses to

furnish an answer (lines 30-47): the talk that she produces in place of an answer here involving her in elaborating upon her stance as described at lines 5-16 and 18-28.

With the PM having now covertly declined to answer the same question on three successive occasions, the interviewer subsequently changes tack. Specifically, he produces a supplementary which offers a possible account for the PM's conduct; namely, that she is not able (or not at liberty) to furnish the information that he has been attempting to elicit from her (lines 48-49). Thus, through the production of this supplementary, the interviewer topicalises the PM's covert refusal(s) to answer his prior questions as the focus for her next turn at talk and, in so doing, of course, effectively provides the PM with a further opportunity to furnish the information which he has been pursuing.

Subsequently, however, the PM confines herself to confirming that she is not in a position to furnish that information (lines 50-53): proposing that she is not at liberty to do so since its production would "put the lives of some of our people at risk".

Across this sequence, then, the interviewer produces two supplementaries (at lines 17 and 29) which are directed to pursuing information which the interviewee has covertly declined to produce, and a third supplementary (at lines 48-49) which is directed to getting the interviewee to explicitly attend to, and account for, the fact that she has covertly refused to answer the same question on three successive occasions.

Another case which involves an interviewer pursuing an answer through the production of supplementary questions is the following. Thus, in this extract, a prominent member of the Labour Party's Shadow Cabinet is being interviewed about a split within the Labour Party

between those who support unilateral nuclear disarmament and those who, by contrast, support multi-lateral nuclear disarmament.

(30) (NW:2.10.81)

1 Int: =You wouldn't serve in a Cabinet committed to lu-  
2 unilateral 'hhh nuclear disarmament of Britain would  
3 you Mister Shore?  
4 PS: 'hh What I do believe:: e:r Mister Day (which) I will  
5 not a:nswe:r that question, I'm not (.) deliberately  
6 answering that question.=What I do believe is thi:s.  
7 I do actually genuinely believe lo:ng believe:(d)'hhh  
8 that unilateral initiative:s (.) can assist (.) multi-  
9 lateral disarmament. 'hhhh And it is that 'hh (0.3)  
10 bridge as it were:: 'h which in my view is the one  
11 that has to be laid between the two different views  
12 within the party.  
13 (.)  
14 Int: → ( )- wu- wu- Would it er help you if you had to  
15 er 'hhhh address your mi:nd to the (.) question which  
16 you put off for one moment as to whether you would  
17 serve in a Cabinet 'hhh committed to unilateral  
18 disarmament of Britain.  
19 PS: 'hhhh I would ne(h)ve::r myse:lf 'hhh (.) er subscribe:  
20 to any actions which I thought exposed the: (.) people  
21 of this country to danger. 'hh And the independence  
22 of these s- s- this isla:nd 'hh er to: (.) foreign  
23 domination.=  
24 Int: → =And would unilatera:l nuclear disarmament 'hhh constitute  
25 such an exposure to danger.  
26 PS: 'hhh (0.7) In many circumstances which I can envisage  
27 it wou:ld.  
(Interview cut)

Here the extract opens with the interviewer asking PS to confirm that he would not "serve in a Cabinet committed to lu- unilateral 'hhh nuclear disarmament". In responding to this question, PS first overtly refuses to furnish an answer (lines 4-6), and then, initiating a new topical line, proceeds to propose that the differences within the Labour Party over the issue of nuclear disarmament are not irreconcilable (lines 6-12). Following this turn, however, the interviewer opts to pursue the topical focus of his unanswered question. In so doing, he (1) effectively sanctions PS's conduct in prior turn (lines 14-16), and then (2) re-solicits the information which PS has refused to furnish (lines 16-18). As it happens, this supplementary achieves a measure



of success. For, in asserting, in a somewhat indirect and veiled response, that he "would ne(h)ve::r...subscribe: to any actions which (he) thought exposed the: (.) people of this country to danger", PS can be heard to subsequently move some way towards providing the information that it is pursuing (lines 19-23). Thus, although he does not here overtly refer to unilateral nuclear disarmament, he can nonetheless be heard to imply that he would be unlikely to sit in a Cabinet which was committed to it.

With his second supplementary (lines 24-25), the interviewer now focuses upon this implication: requesting that PS state whether unilateral nuclear disarmament would "constitute such an exposure to danger". And, in his final turn, PS, by indicating that in many circumstances it would do so, effectively confirms what his prior response could be heard to imply, viz that it is unlikely that he would feel able to serve in a Cabinet which adhered to such a policy.

Here, then, through the use of two supplementaries, the interviewer in effect succeeds in eliciting the information which the interviewee overtly refused to produce in his response to the first question in the extract.

One final detail. It is noticeable that interviewers often sanction the non-production of answers by interviewees (see, for example, lines 14-16 in (30)). In this context, it should be noted that covert refusals to answer interviewers' questions are especially prone to sanctioning. Thus, for example, in (26) the interviewer effectively sanctions an interviewee's covert refusal to answer before proceeding to issue a reformulated version of the unanswered question ("But di-mhm I didn't ask you what advice you were giving,").

(26) (WAO:13.2.79)

Int: 'hhh But are you saying Mister Jarvis that if schools  
are opened on a large scale=  
FJ: =( )-  
Int: 'hhhh erm hhh and (.) cleaning arrangements are made  
and perhaps volunteer labour 'hhhh brought in that  
'hh all your teachers will come in and teach,  
FJ: The advice to our members is- if the school is open  
erm and the working conditions are satisfactory that  
is to say there is cleaning there is heating and so  
on 'hhh that they should do their normal work, but  
not undertake the work of anybody who is on strike.  
(.) 'h That is our advice to our members.  
Int: → But di- mhm I didn't ask you what advice you were giving,  
do you think 'hh that they will in fact do s(h)o.  
FJ: Well we...(continues)

And, for example, in (31) the interviewer, again before re-setting the unanswered question, effectively sanctions an interviewee's covert refusal to answer in the course of explicitly attending to the fact that he is having to ask a question for the second time ("Well can I ask you again").

(31) (WAO:12.2.79)

Int: Well is it a 'h strongly socialist economic approach,  
JU: 'hhh You see we can say that (0.2) as I was submitting  
earlier that we: are: religion and I'm sure Christianity  
(.) and all other religions 'hhhh they preach contentment,  
'hh here: what is this capitalist system says let us  
have a race for becoming millionaires. 'hhh No:w 'h you  
say the rich man and the upper middle class has a  
right to aspire to be greedy and millionaire, 'hh the  
poor member of the TUC is not entitled to be greedy  
and ask for more money, 'hh how can yo:u say 'hh that  
er the rich people or the: petty bourgeoisie the: upper  
middle class has a right to be greedy, 'hhh and the  
poor man and the lower middle class and the proletariat  
'hh has no right to be greedy.  
Int: → Well can [I ask you again wo] uld you compare the  
JU: [(In- in our religion)]  
Int: economic=approach with a strongly socialist (.)  
e\_c o n o\_mic approach.  
JU: [(Well)-]  
Int: We would like to say...(continues)

As to why covert refusals/declinations are especially prone to sanctioning, two reasons can be suggested. First, since covert refusals to answer

treat questions at best as mere topic headings, they constitute a serious threat to an interviewer's role as a competent report elicitor. Second, by sanctioning such refusals, interviewers can be seen to be warranting the reissuing of a question in a context in which an interviewee has not officially or overtly drawn attention to the fact that (s)he has not answered.

### 5.3 Agenda Shifting

As was mentioned at the outset of this chapter, although the news interview turn-taking system effectively restricts the right to manage the topical development of news interview talk to interviewers, in practice interviewees sometimes initiate breaches in the normative question-answer format in order to try and exert some degree of control over what they get to talk to. In our examination of supplementary questioning, we have already introduced some cases in which interviewees undertake such a course of action. Thus, for example, it has been seen that in (30) the interviewee PS not only declines to answer a question (lines 4-6), but also goes on to initiate a new topical line (lines 6-12). That is, he shifts away from the issue of whether he would serve in a cabinet committed to unilateral nuclear disarmament, and focuses instead on the issue of whether the split within the Labour Party over the matter of nuclear disarmament can be bridged.

(30) (NW:2.10.81:Detail)

- 1 Int: =You wouldn't serve in a Cabinet committed to lu-  
2 unilateral 'hhh nuclear disarmament of Britain would  
3 you Mister Shore?  
4 PS: 'hh What I do believe:: e:r Mister Day (which) I will  
5 not a:nswe:r that question, I'm not (.) deliberately  
6 answering that question.=What I do believe is thi:s.  
7 I do actually genuinely believe lo:ng believe:(d) 'hhh  
8 that unilateral initiative:s (.) can assist (.) multi-  
9 lateral disarmament. 'hhhh And it is that 'hh (0.3)

10           bridge as it were:: 'h which in my view is the one  
11           that has to be laid between the two different views  
12           within the party.

In what follows, we consider a range of instances in which interviewees subvert the question-answer format so as to exercise some control over the topical focus of their talk. In so doing, we proceed as follows. First, we outline several of the basic procedures through which interviewees initiate breaches. Second, we describe how the use of these procedures can influence the trajectory of subsequent questioning. And third, we isolate two related procedures which, despite their violative status, appear to represent relatively acceptable means through which interviewees may shift the topical focus of news interview talk.

### 5.3.1 Some Agenda Shifting Procedures

One procedure which interviewees sometimes use in endeavouring to shift from one topic or topical line to another operates roughly as follows: An interviewee (1) shifts away from the topical agenda which a prior question has established for his turn, and then (2), having completed his non-conditionally relevant (and thus violative) talk, proceeds to produce an answer to that question. An example of an interviewee breaching the pre-specified question-answer format in this manner follows.

(32)       (AP:22.1.80)

Int:       So in fact that clause has now [ got two words ]  
JN:       [ Now says serious ] s.=  
Int:       =[ s e ]rious and substan[tia:l,]  
JN:       [ Yes. ] [ Y e s, ] that's right.  
Int:       'h h h Onna what implications from your point of view=  
QM:       =mhm=  
Int:       =does that make,  
QM:       1 → I'd like to make my own position clear first of all.  
          2 → I support the sixty-seven Act. 'h h h h And abortion to  
             be allowed on those particular grounds. 'h I don't believe  
             that we have abortion on request,=still less do we have  
             abortion on demand.

3 → 'hhh The implications of the words serious and substantially  
'hhh are very grave indeed... (continues with answer)

Thus here OM begins her turn by producing an object (1→) which (1) projects the production of (further) non-conditionally relevant talk, (2) establishes a topical agenda for that talk, and (3) indicates that upon the completion of that talk she will attend to the topical agenda which the interviewer's prior question has established for her turn. Following the production of such an object, an interviewer could, of course, warrantably attempt to prevent the remainder of a turn following the trajectory that it projects on the grounds that it would involve a turn-type violation: i.e. something other than an answer. In this case, however, no such resistance is forthcoming from the interviewer; and, in consequence, OM is able (without further negotiation) to furnish non-conditionally relevant talk (2→) prior to the production of an answer (3→). Here, then, through the implementation of a procedure which we shall henceforth refer to as pre-answer agenda shifting, an interviewee succeeds in creating an opportunity for herself to talk to an issue which falls outside of the domain of relevance established by an interviewer's question.

Pre-answer agenda shifting is closely akin to another procedure which interviewees sometimes use in order to shift the topical focus of their talk. This second procedure, like pre-answer agenda shifting, involves interviewees in producing violative talk in conjunction with answers. However, by contrast with pre-answer agenda shifting, that talk is produced in second position. The utilisation of this second procedure, then, involves interviewees in shifting away from the topical agendas which have been established for their turns by interviewers' preceding questions after, rather than prior to, the production of answers.

In this context, it should be noted that post-answer agenda shifts may be accomplished either overtly or covertly. Thus in accomplishing such shifts overtly, interviewees begin their post-answer talk with turn components which (1) project the production of (further) non-conditionally relevant talk, and (2) establish a topical agenda for that talk. An example of an interviewee accomplishing a post-answer agenda shift in this manner is observable in (33). Thus here, having hearably answered the interviewer's question (1 →), the interviewee goes on to establish an alternative topical agenda (2 →), and to then talk to that agenda (3 →).

(33) (P:28.9.81:Simplified)

- Int: =Roy Hattersley from your point of view- Arthur Scargill you can come back in a moment if you want to er about what Neil Kinnock said.=But from your point of view Roy Hattersley 'hhh is it right to interpret this as the beginning of a move back 'hh to the right.=This er victory by such a narrow margin of [Dennis Healey.]
- RH: 1 → 'hhh No ] I don't believe it i:s. In some ways I wish I could say that. 'hhhh But I don't believe it i:s. I believe it's a move back 'hhh to the broad based tolerant representative Labour Part(h)y, 'hhh the Labour Party in which Neil Kinnock and I: who disagree on a number of policy issue:s 'hh can argue about them 'hh without accusing each other of treachery:, 'hhh without suggesting that one or the other of us is playing into the Tories hands. 'hhhh
- 2 → And let me say something about the next year because that was your original question.
- 3 → 'hhh I think Tony Benn would be personally extremely foolish to sta:nd for the deputy leadership again? 'hhhh Because I think the moo:d of the Labour Party is not wanting to go for the: (.) bitter and sterile wrangles, 'hhh but to unite (0.2) to fight the Tories... (continues)

An example of an interviewee accomplishing a post-answer agenda shift without any such explicit marking (i.e., covertly) can be seen in (34). Thus, in this case, the interviewee, having answered the interviewer's question (1 →), clearly shifts away from the topical agenda which has been established for his turn by that question (2 →). That

is, he shifts away from the issue of whether the Labour opposition would vote against any attempt to change the referenced law, and focuses instead on the issue of whether the government will in point of fact attempt to implement such a change. This shift from one topical line to another, however, is not explicitly marked. Rather it is done covertly, as a syntactic continuation of the sentence in which the answer is provided.

(34) (WAO:16.11.79)

Int: If there was a change brought i:n er- to change the la:w Mister Orme would the Labour opposition vote against it?

SO: 1 → 'h h h h Well we would oppose it o:r an'

2 → I cannot see this government contemplating this at the moment, it's the sort of thing that perhaps er 'h h h some Conservative members 'h h h talk about in the corrido:r,= there's been a few letters in the Telegraph, 'h h h but w- in the rea:l world of po:litics e:r this would be: er very divisive indeed.  
(Interview cut).

As has already been mentioned, interviewees may also seek to exert some degree of control over the topical focus of their talk in the context of the non-production of answers. Thus, as was seen above, interviewees may simply ignore the topical agenda which has been established by a prior question, and proceed to direct their talk along an alternative track (see, for example, (26), (29), and (31)). Or, alternatively, they may initiate a topical shift after they have first responded to a prior question by indicating that an answer will not be forthcoming. Two cases in which interviewees undertake this latter course of action have already been discussed (see (28) and (30)). A third example follows.

(23) (O:21.4.81)

Int: D'you quite like him?

EH: 1 → 'h h h h Well er I- I think in politics you see: i- it's not a question of going about liking people or no:t,

- 2 → it's a question of dealing with people.  
 3 → 'hh And e:r I've always been able to deal perfectly well with Mister Wilson and er- indeed he has with me.

Thus here the interviewee (1) denies the relevance of the topical agenda established by the interviewer's question (1→), (2) introduces an alternative and proposedly relevant agenda (2→), and then (3) proceeds to talk to that agenda (3→).<sup>6</sup>

It may finally be noted that, in the context of multi-interviewee interviews, interviewees also have the option of attempting to influence the topical development of their talk through the initiation of turn-type/turn order violations. So, for example, as was noticed in Chapter 3, in (35) an interviewee self-selects at a possible completion of a co-interviewee's answer to a directed question, and by so doing succeeds in creating an opportunity for himself to disagree with a point of view expressed in that answer.

(35) (WAO:15.2.79)

- SB: ...and far less on incomes policy 'hh than he claims to be:.=  
 Int: =Do you think the implications of this document are a (.) tough budget.  
 SB: 'hhh We:ll 'hh again it is important how it's presented. I disagree with the idea 'hhhh that you have to have 'h a budget 'hh to punish workers for wage claims.  
 .  
 .  
 .  
 .  
 The most important thing 'hhh is that Mister Healey 'h should stick to his gu:ns=  
 PJ: → [You s]ee  
 Int: → [Well I-]  
 (.)  
 PJ: → I disagree with- with Sam Brittan on a- in a most (.) fundamental way about this, (.) because (0.2) it may well be so.=I mean he would arg- Sam Brittan would argue from a monetarist point of vie:w.=But what Mister Healey does about the money supply over the next few months 'hhh will...(continues)

These, then, are some of the basic procedures through which interviewees may, in breaching the normative question-answer format, seek



to exert some degree of control over the topical focus of their talk.

### 5.3.2 Subsequent Questioning

On occasion, interviewers produce questions which preserve a topic or topical line which an interviewee has brought into play (or re-established) through the implementation of procedures such as those described above. Thus, for example, in the following extract two MP's are being interviewed about the state of the British economy.

(36) (WAO:17.1.80:Simplified)

- 1 Int: ...What no:w are the prospects ahead. 'hhh Ho:w high  
2 will inflation now go, 'hhh and when d'you think as  
3 'hh experts in this matter that it 'hhh could begin  
4 to come do:wn. First Mister Radice:.  
5 GR: 'hh Well a- as I said I don't think it's (.) going to  
6 come down for a very long ti:me:. =Not until nineteen  
7 eighty two. =  
8 Int: =Do you think it is going to go up as high as it was  
9 under the:: 'Labour Gover<sup>n</sup>me<sup>n</sup>t, the figure of twenty  
10 GR: [Yes]  
11 Int: =eight per cent or something.]  
12 GR: [I think it's quite] possible. It's quite  
13 possible.  
14 Int: Mister Hordern what is your forecast.  
15 PH: 1 → Well I think it may well be: nineteen eighty two: before:  
16 inflation is 'h er under control, =in the sense that  
17 price increases don't rise anything like so fast as  
18 they're going on no:w.  
19 2 → 'hhh But one must be very clear about the cause of  
20 these increases, they are because of the increase in  
21 the price of oil for which we 'hhh cannot stand outside,  
22 and any suggestion that they can be solved 'hhh by  
23 incomes policies or by 'hh printing money has been 'hh  
24 shown to be totally disastrous.  
25 Int: 3 → I hear one or two voices all over the country 'hhh  
26 listening (.) to this who are sayi:ng (.) this is our  
27 very final point 'hh but haven't we got our own oi:l.  
28 PH: 'hh Yes indeed we have got our own oil, = but what's  
29 the point in squandering it...(continues)

Here, having answered the interviewer's question at line 14 (1 →), PH initiates a post-answer agenda shift (2 →). With this shift, which is done overtly, he moves away from the task of forecasting the future rate of inflation, and focuses instead on the issue of why that rate

is rising, and seems destined to continue rising for some time to come. Subsequently, the interviewer focuses on this latter issue: producing a question which can be heard to be directed to undermining PH's assertion that the rising rate of inflation is the result of "the increase in the price of oil for which we 'hhh cannot stand outside" (3 → ). Here, then, an interviewer issues a question which preserves as its topical focus an issue which an interviewee has introduced by means of a post-answer agenda shift.

A similar process is observable in (37) in which a Conservative MP (AM), and a Labour MP (SO), are being interviewed about a move by a group of Tory backbenchers (which includes AM) to get a Conservative government to withdraw the right which Irish residents currently have to vote in British general elections. (It should be noted that it is widely believed that these backbenchers want the Irish voting privilege abolished because the majority of the Irish community in Britain vote Labour).

(37) (WAO:6.11.79)

((SO has already stated that he is strongly opposed to the proposal that Parliament should disenfranchise Irish residents.))

- AM: ...than members of the Labour Par[ty.]  
 Int: [If] this voting right  
unique voting right were withdra:wn Mister Orme would  
 it hurt the Labour Party?  
 SO: 1 → 'hhh I don't know.=And I do- I don't judge it on that  
 basis.  
 2 → I just think the thing i- is illogical an- a- and nonsense.  
 At the moment 'hhhh we are appealing to the Irish Government  
 to take strong action against terrorists, 'hhh er the  
statements of the ( ) only recently about the  
 withdrawal of British troops was welcolmed by the British  
 Government, 'hhh and the British Parliament, 'hhh and to  
bring i:n a divisive measure at this stage 'hhh would in  
 my opinion er be absolutely er nonsense.  
 Int:3 → ' hhhh Mister Marlowe I understand that is the Government's  
 reason for not wanting to do anything about this.  
 (0.2)  
 AM: 'hhhh Well ur-hhhh I d- I don't know whether the Government  
 is or isn't going to do anything about it...(continues)

With his first question in this extract, the interviewer asks the Labour MP, SO, whether the withdrawal of the Irish voting right would "hurt the Labour Party?" (presumably in terms of lost votes). SO, however, does not subsequently furnish an answer. Rather he asserts a lack of information (1→) and then, having stated that he does not judge the issue on this basis, proceeds to shift away from the topical agenda which the interviewer's question has established for his turn (2→). That is, he shifts away from the issue of whether the abolition of the Irish voting right would "hurt the Labour Party?", and focuses instead on the implications which such a move might have for the relationship between Britain and Eire.

In his next turn, the interviewer opts to direct a question to the Conservative MP, AM, which focuses upon the materials that SO has produced by means of his agenda shift (3→). Thus, rather than either re-establishing the topical focus of his unanswered question, or introducing a new topic or topical line, the interviewer here takes up the issue (which SO has introduced) of the relationship between Britain and Eire: focusing on the possibility that the government is resisting the call for Irish residents to be disenfranchised because, like SO, it believes that this relationship would be soured by such an action. Here, then, as in (36), the topical focus of an interviewee's violative talk is preserved in an interviewer's subsequent question.

Of course, as has already been seen, interviewers do not always opt to maintain the topical focus of an interviewee's violative talk. On some occasions, for example, they produce subsequent questions which are directed to re-establishing the topical focus of the materials which precede such talk (for example, see (30)). And on other occasions, for example, they produce subsequent questions which initiate a new

topic or topical line (for example, see (28)). In spite of this, however, the fact that interviewers do sometimes sustain lines of talk which have been initiated by interviewees means that interviewees may, in certain circumstances, significantly influence the development of topical talk in news interviews.

### 5.3.3 The Relative Acceptability of the Agenda Shifting Procedures

In breaching the question-answer format, interviewees routinely display an orientation to the character of news interview interaction in three basic ways. First, they overwhelmingly confine themselves to producing violative talk whose relevance is provided for by a given interview's overall topical agenda. Second, they typically avoid producing talk which projects further violative behaviour.<sup>7</sup> And third, in the context of multi-interviewee interviews, they frequently continue to address themselves to an interviewer.<sup>8</sup>

With these three features limiting the extent to which interviewees shift away from their institutional footing, those breaches which exhibit them are generally less likely to be sanctioned by interviewers than those which do not. With this said, however, the likelihood of a bit of violative talk, which exhibits these features, being sanctioned varies considerably according to the type of procedure which has been used to initiate it. For it turns out that, other things being equal, the procedures of pre- and post- answer agenda shifting are sanctioned far less often than are the other procedures through which an interviewee may initiate a breach.

As to why this is so, in developing on our observations in the previous chapter, it can be noted that at least two of the sanctionable aspects of the other procedures are absent in the context of pre-

and post- answer agenda shifts. Thus, to begin with, the violative talk which results from pre- and post- answer agenda shifting is always produced in conjunction with an answer. And, as such, one basis for sanctioning - namely, the non-production of an answer - does not arise. Moreover, because pre- and post- answer agenda shifts do not involve interviewees 'talking out of turn', they do not in themselves undermine or threaten the rights of interviewers concerning turn-allocation. Accordingly, a second basis for sanctioning is also absent.

To sum up: Pre- and post- answer agenda shifts currently represent the least sanctioned, and thus most acceptable, of the procedures through which interviewees may attempt to breach the pre-specified question-answer format. This phenomenon would appear to stem from the fact that these two procedures (1) generally involve interviewees in shifting less markedly away from their institutionalized footings than do the other procedures for initiating *violative talk*, and thus (2) do not so seriously threaten the rights or perceived competence of an interviewer as do those other procedures.

In this chapter, we have described some of the standard uses of supplementary questioning in news interview contexts. We have also outlined some of the procedures through which interviewees attempt to exercise some degree of control over the management of topic. Shortly, we shall discuss a number of points which are relevant to the analysis of these two domains of news interview conduct. First, however, we turn to examine a further dimension of news interview behaviour: the organisation of disagreement.

Footnotes to Chapter Five

1. The topical relationship of such questions to the talk that they follow will be considered in some detail in section 5.3. It should be stressed here, however, that they may or may not initiate a shift away from the topical focus of that talk.
2. Although IG's "the argument will continue:" is hearable as a statement of intent, it is clearly not the statement of intent which the interviewer is after.
3. Note, moreover, that the incorporation of "really" into the supplementary's construction serves to reinforce the doubt which is conveyed in and through its production.
4. It may be noted here that during the production of the prefatory materials in the interviewer's turn, the interviewee is already attending to a possible discrepancy between his prior statement and the presence of the two named parties in the list of appointments (see lines 15 and 17).
5. An instance in which this is not the case is located at lines 25-27 of (36) below.
6. It should be stressed that (1) and (2) have been separated here for analytic purposes. In point of fact, they clearly combine to challenge the relevance of the question, with (2) additionally operating to set up a topical shift.
7. In other words, their violative talk generally provides for an immediate reinstitution of the normative question-answer format in the next turn (although it does not follow that this always occurs).
8. This feature is further discussed in relation to violatively produced disagreements in the next chapter.

## Chapter Six

### THE MANAGEMENT OF DISAGREEMENT IN NEWS INTERVIEWS

#### 6.1 Introduction

Multi-interviewee interviews generally involve interviewees who have been selected as 'representatives of alternative points of view'.<sup>1</sup> One consequence of this is that disagreement between news interviewees is an extremely common phenomenon. Indeed, it is easy enough to find cases in which interviewees remain in disagreement throughout a television or radio news interview.

In the present chapter, some of the characteristic features of the turns and sequences through which interviewee-interviewee disagreements are managed are identified and accounted for. In brief, it is shown that the organisation of disagreement between news interviewees differs markedly from the organisation of disagreement between speakers in ordinary conversation. And it is proposed that these differences are the product of considerations of 'footings' which are largely associated with the turn-type pre-allocated character of the news interview turn-taking system.

Although the major part of the chapter is concerned with the management of disagreements between interviewees, some preliminary remarks concerning disagreements that involve interviewers are also offered. It should be emphasised, however, that a detailed analysis of such disagreements has yet to be embarked upon.

#### 6.2 The Organisation of Disagreement in Conversation

In mundane conversation the organisation of agreements and dis-

agreements is informed by the operation of a preference system which in the vast majority of contexts affords agreements the status of preferred actions, and disagreements the status of dispreferred actions. Thus, whereas agreements are normally performed directly and with a minimum of delay, disagreements are commonly accomplished in mitigated forms and delayed from early positioning within turns and/or sequences (Pomerantz, 1975, 1984b).

One type of procedure which is regularly used to delay the occurrence of disagreements is that of 'no-immediately-forthcoming-talk' (Pomerantz, 1984b:70). So, for example, in the following extract B delays the production of a disagreement turn (D) by permitting a gap to develop prior to its initiation.

(1) (NB:IV:11.-1)

- A: God izn it dreary.  
     → (0.6)  
 A: Y'know I don't think-  
 B: (D) [ 'hh- It's warm though,

Another procedure which is recurrently used to delay the occurrence of disagreements involves the production of repair initiators (i.e. requests for clarification, questioning repeats, etc.) as pre-disagreement turns (Pomerantz, 1984b:71). Thus, for example, due to the production of a request for clarification, the disagreement (D) in (2) is produced not in the turn adjacent to the one which established the relevance of agreement/disagreement, but rather in a later turn. (Note moreover that, having been thus displaced over a number of turns, the disagreement is further delayed by the occurrence of a pre-turn initiation gap following the response to the request for clarification).

(2) (TG:1)

- B: Why whhat'sa matтуh with y-Yih sou [ nd HA:PPY, hh  
 A: [ Nothing.



- A: → I sound ha:p [ py?  
 B:                    [ Ye:uh.  
                   (0.3)  
 A: (D) No: ,

Apart from being regularly delayed by pre-turn initiation gaps and/or repair initiators, disagreements are also often delayed within the turns in which they occur (Pomerantz 1984b:72). So, for example, disagreement components are frequently delayed and mitigated by agreement prefaces as in (3).

(3)            (MC:1.13)

- L:        I know but I, I- I still say that the sewing machine's quicker.  
 W: → Oh it c'n be quicker but it doesn't do the jo:b,

As was noted in Chapter Three, the delayed production of dispreferred actions minimises the likelihood of their occurrence by providing for the possibility of their being forestalled. Thus, in contexts in which agreement/disagreement is relevant (and in which disagreement is dispreferred), a speaker may (i) analyse the occurrence of one (or more) of the devices associated with the delaying of disagreements (1→) as implicating an unstated or as-yet-unstated disagreement, and (ii), having done so, attempt to forestall the anticipated disagreement's production by backing away from a prior assertion (2→) (Pomerantz 1984b:76).

(4)            (SBL:3.1.-8)

- B:        ...an' that's not an awful lotta fruitcake.  
           1→ (1.0)  
 B: 2→ Course it is. A little piece goes a long way.  
 A:        Well that's right.

It only remains to be added here that, in addition to occurring in the context of potential or as-yet-unstated disagreements, moderated reformulations of prior assertions also occur after the production of stated disagreements (Pomerantz 1975 ). One consequence of this

is that disagreement sequences in conversation often involve some movement away from disagreement prior to their being terminated. Thus, for example, in the following extract D is attempting to persuade C to abandon a plan to emigrate to Switzerland.

(5) (G:II:2:33)

((C has informed D that one of the reasons for her wanting to emigrate to Switzerland is the high level of taxation in the USA)).

- D: If y'go tuh Switzerland yer payin about fifty percent a' yer money in ta:xes.  
 C: - Not in Swi:tzerl'nd.  
 D: (No) I think it i:s.  
 C: 'hhhh ((fri)) No:::,  
 (0.7)  
 D: 1 → Well you pay awful high ta(h)axes over there,  
 (0.2)  
 C: 2 → Wa:l, (.) There's ul awful loo'v other benefits. t-  
 t- to:r:eap from it] too [::.  
 D: 3 → [That might be.] That might be..  
 (.)  
 D: 4 → Connie I can' argue that c'z I've never been there.  
 (1.0)  
 D: Bu::t anyway:::  
 C: 'h 'hhhhhh B't anyway: gimme a jingle Dee:, but give  
 me: please do try en give me a few days' noti[ ce.  
 D: [Oh: li[sten. I]=  
 C: [ 'hhhhh ]=  
 D: =[ ( ) ]  
 C: [Uh least a] wee:k e: [::: n uh] then it's easier fer=  
 D: [ ( ) ]  
 C: =me tuh= wo:rk something out [ here ]  
 D: [ Sh:u: ] u:re.  
 D: I'd give y'a wee:k 8n uh::: hell maybe...

Here, following C's disagreement, D produces a modified version of his assertion that the percentage of income paid in taxes in Switzerland is "about fifty percent" (arrow one). In so doing, he moderates his position by producing an assessment which admits the possibility that Swiss taxes (while high) may not be as high as he previously estimated. In next turn, C permits this moderated assertion to stand as stated, and progresses the movement away from the disagreement which it initiated (arrow two) by asserting the existence of 'other benefits'. Subsequently

D, having further de-escalated his disagreement with C by acknowledging that there may (as C has proposed) be other benefits to be gained from living in Switzerland (arrow three), then proceeds to effectively initiate an exit from the present disagreement sequence (arrow four). And following this, the disagreement sequence is duly terminated, with C and D collaborating in the accomplishment of a topical shift.

In sum, then, in conversation we find that (1) disagreements are normally delayed from early positioning within turns and/or sequences and that (2) disagreement sequences routinely involve some movement away from disagreement prior to their being terminated.

### 6.3 The Organisation of Interviewee-Interviewee Disagreement

Disagreements between news interviewees differ from disagreements between speakers in ordinary conversation in a number of important respects. These differences can be summarised as follows:

- (1) Interviewee-interviewee disagreements are routinely elicited by and/or addressed to a non-disagreed with third party.
- (2) Interviewee-interviewee disagreements are not systematically delayed via the use of pre-turn initiation gaps, repair initiators, or agreement prefaces.
- (3) Interviewee-interviewee disagreement sequences rarely involve a movement away from disagreement, and exits from them are overwhelmingly initiated by a non-disagreed with third party.

In what follows, it will be argued that these aspects of the organisation of interviewee-interviewee disagreement are largely the product of considerations which derive from the character of turn-taking in news interview settings.

6.3.1 Interviewee-interviewee disagreements are routinely elicited by and/or addressed to a non-disagreed with third party

Due to its turn-type pre-allocated character, the news interview turn-taking system only provides for the possibility of interviewees performing disagreements as answers (or as parts of answers) to interviewers' questions. Accordingly, disagreements between interviewees are properly elicited by, and thus addressed to, an interviewer who, in such contexts, represents a non-disagreed with third party.

Examples of interviewee-interviewee disagreements being performed in this manner are observable in (7), (8), and (9). Thus, in each of these cases, an interviewer produces a question which provides for the relevance of an interviewee agreeing/disagreeing with a co-interviewee's prior talk (→). And, in each case, the recipient of that question subsequently elects to disagree with the other interviewee in the course of furnishing an answer (D→).

(7) (WAO:17.1.80)

- Int: But how does the government (.) curb inflation which was the central 'hhhh (.) plank in its election policy:.=
- PH: =It certainly was and it will be: and what is more the government is determined to keep down the increase in the supply of money which is the: main determining factor which 'hhh e:r er- concerns prices, that's [ wha-  
Mister Radi]
- Int: → ce what's your answer to that.
- GR: D → Well of course I don't agree with that,=bu- er- as the: the: the: inflation rate has increased by seven per cent since the general election,=and 'hh much of this in fact about five per cent of this is directly 'hh attributable to what the government has done.=The fact that they increased...(continues)

(8) (WW:6.6.79)

- Int: 'hhh Supposing ou::r (.) scenario about British Leyland (.) actually came about. What do you think she would do: in the circumstances of Mister Edwards coming along and asking for further state dole.
- PC: I don't think Mister Edwards would get another state dole.
- Int: → What d'you think Perg.

PW: D → I think tht in the circumstances that you've described she would e:r give way.=Rather along the: the: the: the: the Heath line.= So I think that the possibility of 'hhh having thousands of people laid off in the Midlands which is a very 'hh volatile area I think.=(An) area where disagreeable things can easily happen.=Birmingham.= Think of that (.) awful place. 'hhhh e:r The thought of all those British Leyland workers running rampage.=I think that she would probably give way like Heath did.

Int: I shall restrain mysaelff er from saying anything about

PW: ( )

Int: =your view of Birmingham. 'hhhh Alright (.) we've got a straight disagreement between you on the industrial thing...(continues)

(9) (WAO:12.4.79)

Int: John Mackintosh an autumn election?=or a spring election next year.

JM: Oh I think an autumn election,=but for quite different reason.=I think the budget 'hh does not- 'hhh it's not an electioneering budget.=It's a steady sensible budget. 'hhh And the case for an autumn election is the: 'hh difficult position of the government in parliament. 'hhh And I would have thought that the government would want to go for a proper majority in October.

Int: → Teddy Taylor do you see an autumn election.

TT: D → Actually I don't see an autumn election.=Because I think we're going to have a lot of trouble by the autumn. I think the government will stagger on until the last possible time..

Although interviewees usually confine themselves to producing disagreements with their co-interviewees in the manner illustrated in these extracts (i.e. as answers to interviewers' questions), they do not always do so. Three examples which will serve to illustrate this follow.

Our first two examples involve interviewee-interviewee disagreements being performed in and through turns which represent turn-type/turn order violations.

(10) (WAO:15.2.79)

SB: ...and far less on incomes policy 'hh then he claims to be:.=

Int: =Do you think the implications of this document are a (.) tough budget.

SB: 'hhh We:ll 'hh again it is important how it's presented.

I disagree with the idea 'h h h h that you have to have  
'h a budget 'h h to punish workers for wage claims.

.

.

. ((13 lines of answer omitted))

The most important thing 'h h h is that Mister Healey  
'h should stick to his gu:ns.=

PJ: → [You s ]ee

Int: [Well I-]

(.)

PJ: D → I disagree with- with Sam Brittan on a- in a most (.)  
fundamental way about this, (.) because (0.2) it may  
well be so.=I mean he would arg- Sam Brittan would argue  
from a monetarist point of vie:w.=But what Mister Healey  
does about the money supply over the next few months 'h h h  
will...(continues)

(11) (LRC:20.10.80)

Int: 'h h Gordon Morgan isn't a- isn't it a strange position  
to adopt that the Labour Party's wanting to come out  
of Europe and now you're complaining because er Europe  
isn't doing even better for us, er they're not likely  
to are they,

GM: They're not likely to. John Taylor will kno:w on on  
the budget committee or whatever he sits on 'h h that fifty-  
four per cent of the budget no:w 'h h is directed to  
the Common Agricultural Policy. 'h h h With the enlargement  
of the: erm of the EEC 'h h with Greece coming in I (.)  
believe next year (.) Spain and Portugal coming in later  
'h h that budget will inevitably gro:w, 'h at the expense  
(0.2) of the West Midland region.

JT: D → No that isn' [t true]

GM: [I beli] eve...(continues)

Thus, in each of these extracts, an interviewee initiates a turn at  
a possible completion of a co-interviewee's answer to an interviewer's  
directed question in order to disagree with a point of view expressed  
in that answer.

Our third example involves an interviewee producing a disagreement  
by means of a post-answer agenda shift.

(12) (WAO:24.1.81)

((In this case, a journalist (PJ), and a former defence  
minister (LC), are being interviewed about the implications  
of the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan. PJ has  
previously asserted (data not shown) that, since Afghanistan  
has been "for a long while within the Soviet sphere of

influence", the invasion has not significantly altered the balance of power in the Middle East.))

1 PJ: =And erm this I think is what the Saudi Arabians said  
2 very strongly to-to- to Lord Carrington. This was their  
3 view I understand.  
4 Int: Would you want Lord Chalfont would you like to see 'hhh bases  
5 built up to [ to to ] defence from the arc of the crisis as=  
6 LC: [ not- not ]  
7 Int: =it were.=  
8 LC: =Not formal bases in the old sense of Aden or Singapore:  
9 in the days of the British presence east of Suez, what  
10 I would like to see: is a strong military and naval  
11 maritime presence by the West in that arc, [ 'hhhh e:r =  
12 Int: Which would =  
13 LC: =in- in- in- co- ]=  
14 Int: =involve bases wouldn't it.]=  
15 LC: =Well it wouldn't necessarily require [ a- an ( ) =  
16 Int: In ( ) or =  
17 LC: = or ] Persian=  
18 Int: =Persia!  
19 LC: =kind of base. But it requires arrangements with (   
20 ( ) perhaps in ( ) 'hhh with the: Kenyans in  
21 Mobassa, perhaps with the Somalies, 'hhh but I want  
22 to make a point about what Peter said. 'hhh a- And that  
23 D → is that surely the invasion of (.) Afghanistan has made  
24 the whole difference,=It is true as he says that since  
25 nineteen-seventy eight 'hhhh perhaps even a little before  
26 that 'hhh e:r Afghanistan has been in the Russian sphere  
27 of influence, the difference now is 'hh that the Red  
28 Army (.) the armoured divisions of the Red Army are  
29 on the frontiers of Ira:n. 'hhh I don't know whether  
30 Peter realises that there are now two armoured divisions  
31 'hh five hours 'h from ( ) on the Persian Gulf,  
32 'along a road 'hh from South West Afghanistan to South  
33 West Iran. [ This is the big difference.  
34 Int: ( ) -

In this case, LC disagrees with PJ's view that the invasion of Afghanistan has not significantly altered the balance of power in the Middle East (lines 23-33). That disagreement, however, is not produced as an answer to an interviewer's question. Rather it is produced by means of an overtly initiated post-answer agenda shift (lines 21-22). Here, then, as in (10 and 11), an interviewee clearly breaches the normative question-answer format in order to disagree with a co-interviewee's earlier statements.

It may also be observed that, in breaching the pre-specified

question-answer format, interviewees normally seek to limit the extent to which they can be heard to shift away from the institutionalised footing of an 'interviewee'. A central means by which interviewees manage this limitation in multi-interviewee interviews is by continuing to address their talk to the interviewer. So, for example, even though the interviewee-interviewee disagreements in (10) and (12) are not produced as answers to interviewers' questions, the authors of those disagreements nonetheless continue to treat news interviewers as the primary in situ recipients of their talk by, amongst other things, referring to the disagreed with parties in the third person.

(10) (WAO:15.2.79:Detail)

((Extract from an interview involving two interviewees and a single interviewer)).

- SB: The most important thing 'hhh is that Mister Healey 'h should stick to his guns.=
- PJ: = [You s] ee
- Int: = [Well I ]
- (.)
- PJ: → I disagree with (Sam Brittan) on a- in a most (.) fundamental way about this, (.) because (0.2) it may well be so.=I
- mean (he) would arg- (Sam Brittan) would argue from a monetarist point of view.=But what Mister Healey does about the money supply over the next few months 'hhh will...(continues)

(12) (WAO:24.1.81:Detail)

((Extract from an interview involving two interviewees and a single interviewer)).

- LC: West in that arc, [ 'hhhh e:r in- in- in- co- ]=
- Int: [Which would involve bases wouldn't it.]
- LC: = Well it wouldn't necessarily require [a- an ( ) or Persian=
- Int: [In ( ) or Persia.]
- LC: = kind of base. But it requires arrangements with ( ) perhaps in ( ) 'hhh with the: Kenyans in Mobassa, perhaps with the Somalies, 'hhh but I want to make a
- point about what (Peter) said. 'hhh a- And that is that surely the invasion of (.) Afghanistan has made the
- whole difference,=it is true as (he) says that since nineteen seventy-eight 'hhhh perhaps even a little before that 'hhh e:r Afghanistan has been in the Russian sphere of influence, the difference now is 'hh that the Red



→ Army (.) the armoured divisions of the Red Army are on the frontiers of Ira:n. 'hhh I don't know whether (Peter) realises that there are now two armoured divisions 'hh five hours 'h from ( ) on the Persian Gulf, 'h along a road 'hh from South West Afghanistan to South West Iran.

Int: [ This is the big difference.  
( )-

In these sequences, the interviewees' talk simultaneously violates and conforms with the expectancies of the news interview. While they breach the normative question-answer pattern of talk which is a constitutive component of the news interview, the interviewees talk, in that it continues to be addressed to the news interviewer, nonetheless conforms with the expectancy that such talk should properly be addressed to the interviewer, and thus maintains, in substantial part at least, the footing of a news interviewee. This procedure is a common method of producing turn-type/turn order violative talk in news interviews.

In sum, due to considerations which have to do with the turn-type pre-allocated character of turn-taking in news interviews, disagreements between news interviewees stand in contrast to those between speakers in conversation in that they are routinely elicited by and/or addressed to a non-disagreed with third party.

#### 6.3.2 Interviewee-interviewee disagreements are not systematically delayed via the use of pre-turn initiation gaps, repair initiators, or agreement prefaces.

Interviewee-interviewee disagreements which are produced as answers to interviewers' questions are not systematically delayed via the use of pre-turn initiation gaps, repair initiators, or agreement prefaces.<sup>2</sup> Rather, as is illustrated in the following extracts, they are characteristically performed with little or no delay.

(7) (WAO:17.1.80:Detail)

Int: But how does the government (.) curb inflation which was the central 'hhh (.) plank in its election policy:.=

PH: =It certainly wa:s and it will be:: a:nd what is more the government is determined to keep down the increase in the supply of money which is the: ma:in determining factor which 'hhh e:r er- concerns prices, [that's wha-]

Int: [Mister Radi] ce what's your answer to that.

GR: → Well of course I don't agree with that...(continues)

(8) (WW:6.6.79:Detail)

Int: 'hhh Supposing ou::r (.) scenario about British Leyland (.) actually came about. What do you think she would do: in the circumstances of Mister Edwards coming along and asking for further state dole.

PC: I don't think Mister Edwards would get another state dole.

Int: What d'you think Perg.

PW: → I think that in the circumstances that you've described she would e:r give way...(continues)

(9) (WAO:12.4.79:Detail)

Int: John Mackintosh an autumn election?=or a spring election next year.

JM: Oh I think an autumn election,

.

.

. ((Approximately 5 lines omitted))

.

.

Int: Teddy Taylor do you see an autumn election.

TT: → Actually I don't see an autumn election...(continues)

(12) (NW:13.10.81)

NS: But of course there are people in the Cabinet, 'h there are people sti:ll in the government 'hh who reject that approach, 'hhh and who like myself 'h want to put forwa:rd the traditional vie:ws of Conservatism, 'hhh with our social and mora:l conce::rn, 'hh economics being there certainly, 'h control of the money supply being 'h a part of our policy, 'hh but not be:ing projected as our only policy or our main policy.

Int: George Gardner does that sat- satisfy you in any way?

GG: → N(h)o- not in the lea:st...(continues)

As for violatively produced interviewee-interviewee disagreements, any gross inspection of news interview materials will reveal that these too are routinely produced without the 'relevant' preference features.

So, for example, in the following extracts interviewee-interviewee disagreements which are produced by means of turn-type/turn order violations are performed with little or no delay.

(10) (WAO:115.2.79:Detail)

SB: The most important thing 'hhh is that Mister Healey 'h  
should stick to his gu:ns.=  
PJ: → [You s ]ee  
Int: → [Well I-]  
(.)  
PJ: → I disagree with- with Sam Brittan on a- in a most (.)  
fundamental way about this...(continues)

(11) (LRC:20.10.80:Detail)

GM: ...that budget will inevitably gro:w, 'at the expense  
(0.2) of the West Midland region.  
JT: → No that isn' [t true.]  
GM: [I beli] eve...(continues)

(14) (LRC:20.10.80:Simplified) (To be replaced)

DW: ...that's a fa:r more important and (.) a just way of  
going about matters, 'hh than selling off the best type  
of coun [cil house.]  
TD: → [No rubbish,] they're not always the best.

In the following extracts, interviewee-interviewee disagreements (D→) which are produced by means of turn-type/turn order violations are delayed, but not by the occurrence of one or more of the preference features. Rather, they are delayed by the occurrence of talk which in (15) involves an interviewee providing for or establishing the relevance of his violative talk, and which in (16) involves an interviewee in producing a 'token' request for permission (1→) and a formulation of the disagreed with interviewee's position (2→).

(15) (LRC:20.10.80)

GM: ...it is shameful 'h that we as a nation (0.2) pay in  
this yea:r on budget figures thirty-two pounds per year,  
'hhh while we in the West Midlands 'hhh where there are  
(0.5) forty per cent of the unemployed and the em-  
unemployment figure in the West Midlands is now creeping  
up to two hundred thousand, 'hh the figures are out tomorrow,

Int: 'hh I advise everybody to watch them, 'hhh a [nd and I]  
[John Taylor]  
JT: → ca [n I-  
Int: [I I think it's tim [e I should come in to de] al- I=  
[Haven't we begun to::]  
JT: 'think it's time I should= deal with those points that have  
just been made.  
D → 'hhh The proportion of the Community budget that's spent  
on agriculture 'h must shrink...(continues)

(16) (LRC:20.10.80)

((Extract from an interview in which the interviewees TD and  
DW are respectively making the cases for and against council  
tenants having the right to buy their accommodation))..

DW: ...When the matter was raised in the House of Commons 'hh  
when we asked the Tory ministers 'h why not give p- (.)  
private tenants the right to bu:y 'h then of course we  
were told it's out of the question, 'h why not give (.)  
council=  
TD: =We'll look-  
DW: [pri] vate tenants as well  
1 → [Well no:w ma] y I say this ( ) to  
the:: to- to this subject,=  
2 → =i- it's a very interesting point because all can't do  
it 'hhh David says none should do it. 'hhh erm If I may  
D → say- if you work on that basis you're alwa:ys going to  
have a a-a-a- a very divisive society...(continues)

Finally in the following extracts, interviewee-interviewee disagreements  
which are produced by means of straightforward turn-type violations  
are also delayed: but once again the delays do not result from the occur-  
rence of the devices associated with the organisation of disagreements  
in conversation. Rather, they result from the fact that the disagreements  
are being produced by means of pre- and post answer agenda shifts re-  
spectively. Thus, in (17) OM's disagreement (D→) with JN's view that  
the 1967 Abortion Act permits abortion on request (and as such should  
be amended) is delayed by talk which is directed to initiating a pre-  
answer agenda shift (→).

(17) (AP:22.1.80:Simplified)

((In this extract, two MPs are making the cases for (JN) and  
against (OM) a proposed amendment to the 1967 Abortion Act)).

1 Int: Well Jill Knight I'd like to move you on now to the- to  
 2 the: the other issue: that's causing concern, and that's  
 3 the change in the grounds 'hh fo:r abo:rtion, 'hhh e::rm  
 4 can you- could you('d) say now how the Bill stands on  
 5 that.  
 6 JK: 'hhh Yes. What the Bill is trying to do here:: is mee  
 7 the objections of the Lane Committee and the Select  
 8 Committee, 'hh both of which studied the: working of the  
 9 Abortion Act 'hh very carefully indeed. 'hh And both of  
 10 them came to the conclusion that as things were: 'hh we  
 11 were- have virtually got (.) abortion on request. 'hh And  
 12 this was made absolutely clea:r throughout the: 'hh first  
 13 sessions of the first Bill 'hhh that this is not what  
 14 parliament wanted, =not what parliament voted for. 'hhh And  
 15 again and again the sponsors said 'hh we are not voting  
 16 for abortion on request. 'hhh And so the first thi:ng  
 17 was er that 'hh er the present Bill had to be looked at  
 18 to see 'hh where you could tighten up, in other words  
 19 where you could 'hh sa:y that an abortion is a serious  
 20 operation 'hhh and you have to have a serious reason for  
 21 wanting to get rid of a child.  
 22 Int: So in fact that clause has now got [two wo:nds (.) se]rious=  
 23 JK: [Now says serious. Yes.]  
 24 Int: =and substant[ial.]  
 25 JK: [Yes] that's right.  
 26 Int: 'C'ma what implications from your point of view=  
 27 OM: =mhmm=  
 28 Int: =does that make,  
 29 OM: → I'd like to make my own position clear first of all.  
 30 0 → I support the sixty-seven Act. 'hhhh And abortion to be  
 31 allowed on those particular grounds. 'h I don't believe  
 32 that we have abortion on request, =still less do we have  
 33 abortion on demand. 'hhh The implications of the words  
 34 serious and substantially 'hhh are very grave indeed...  
 35 (continues with answer)

And in (12), LC's disagreement (D→) with PJ is delayed by (i) an answer to the interviewer's prior question (1→), and by (ii) a turn component which is directed to initiating a post-answer agenda shift (2→).

(12) (WAO:14.1.81:Detail)

((In this case, a journalist (PJ), and a former defence minister (LC), are being interviewed about the implications of the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan. PJ has previously asserted (data not shown) that, since Afghanistan has been "for a long while within the Soviet sphere of influence, the invasion has not significantly altered the balance of power in the Middle East)).

PJ: =And erm this I think is what the Saudi Arabians said very strongly to- to- to Lord Carrington. This was their view I understand.

Int: Would you want Lord Chalfont would you like to see 'hhh  
bases built up to to defend from the arc of crisis as  
LC: not- not-  
Int: it were.=  
LC: =Not formal bases in the old sense of Aden or Singapore: in the  
days of the British presence east of Suez, what I would like to  
see: is a strong military and naval maritime presence by the  
West in that arc, ['hhh e:r in- in- in- co-]=  
Int: [Which would involve bases wouldn't it.]=  
LC: 1→ Well it wouldn't necessarily require [a- an ( ) or Persian=  
Int: [In ( ) or Persia].  
LC: =kind of 'base. But it requires arrangements with ( )  
perhaps in ( ) 'hhh with the: Kenyans in Mombassa,  
2→ perhaps with the Somalies, 'hhhh but I want to make a point  
D→ about what Peter said. 'hhh a- And that is that surely the  
invasion of (.) Afghanistan has made the whole difference...  
(continues)

That pre-turn initiation gaps, repair initiators, and agreement prefaces rarely occur in the context of those interviewee-interviewee disagreements which are produced as answers to interviewers' questions is largely a product of the fact that such disagreements (in contrast to the vast majority of disagreements in conversational interaction) are elicited by, and addressed to, a non-disagreed with third party. Thus it may be noted that, if an interviewee were to delay such a disagreement via the use of one or more of these devices, he would by definition be moving away from (if not abandoning) the footing of a party who is answering a non-disagreed with interviewer's question, and moving towards (if not adopting) the footing of a party who is in direct, unmediated disagreement with the disagreed with co-interviewee. That is to say, he would be treating, or at least moving in the direction of treating, the disagreed with co-interviewee, rather than the non-disagreed with interviewer/questioner as the primary recipient of his talk. Against this background, then, it can be seen that, in order to maintain the footing of a party who is unequivocally engaged in answering a non-disagreed with interviewer's question (and thus, by extension, in order to maintain the institutionalised stance of a news

interviewee vis-a-vis a news interviewer), it is necessary for an interviewee to produce such a disagreement without the preference caveats that are normally associated with the production of unmediated disagreements in conversation.

As to why violative interviewee-interviewee disagreements are also characteristically performed without the 'relevant' preference features, it would appear that similar considerations often come into play. For, as has been noted, in producing such disagreements interviewees regularly limit the extent to which they shift away from their institutional footing by continuing to address their talk to a non-disagreed with news interviewer. Thus it may be suggested that in those cases in which interviewees do this, the production of a disagreement without the preference features which are associated with the production of unmediated disagreements in conversation is a central means through which they identify a non-disagreed with interviewer, rather than a disagreed with co-interviewee, as the primary recipient of their talk: the point once again being that the production of an interviewee-interviewee disagreement with those preference features would (and does) necessarily involve them in moving towards (if not adopting) the stance of a party who is engaged in direct, unmediated disagreement with a co-interviewee.

Finally, it can be noted that one way in which an interviewee may 'step up' or maximise a disagreement is to produce it in an unmediated form, as in (11) and (14).

(11) (LRL:20.10.80:Detail)

GM: ...that budget will inevitably grow, 'h at the expense  
(0.2) of the West Midlands region  
JT: → No that isn't true  
[I beli] eve...(continues)

(14) (LRC:20.10.80)

DW: ...that's fa:r more important and (.) a just way of going  
about matters, 'hh than selling off the best type of  
Coun [cil house.]  
TD: → [No rubbish,] they're not always the best.

For, on the one hand, an unmediated disagreement is intrinsically stronger than a mediated disagreement on account of its being directly addressed to a disagreed with (rather than a non-disagreed with) party. And, on the other hand, the production of such a disagreement involves an interviewee in literally abandoning his institutional footing. Against this background then, it is perhaps unsurprising that unmediated interviewee-interviewee disagreements are rarely accomplished in mitigated or indirect forms. For it can be suggested that if their authors were concerned about mitigating their disagreements, then they would not have in the first place opted to discard their institutionalised stance in order to enter into direct disagreement with the disagreed with co-interviewee.

In sum, interviewee-interviewee disagreements are normally produced without the preference caveats that are associated with the production of disagreements in mundane conversation. This aspect of news interviewee conduct is largely a product of the fact that such disagreements are ordinarily and appropriately elicited by and/or addressed to a non-disagreed with third party.

### 6.3.3 Interviewee-interviewee disagreement sequences rarely involve a movement away from disagreement, and exits from them are overwhelmingly initiated by a non-disagreed with third party

Whereas exits from disagreement sequences in conversation are normally initiated by the disagreeing parties themselves, exits from



interviewee-interviewee disagreement sequences in news interviews are normally initiated by non-disagreed with third parties. Thus, in the vast majority of cases, such exits are initiated not by interviewees, but rather by interviewers.

In many instances, interviewers initiate exits from sequences embodying disagreements between interviewees following a first disagreement turn. In the context of those interviewee-interviewee disagreements which are produced as answers to interviewers' questions, this routinely involves them in straightforwardly asserting their institutionalised right to initiate a topical shift through the production of any next question. In the context of those interviewee-interviewee disagreements which are not so produced, it also routinely involves them in initiating a repair on the breach through which a disagreement has been furnished.

An example of an interviewer initiating an exit following a first disagreement which has been produced as an answer to an interviewer's question is observable in (8a). In this extract, two political commentators are being interviewed a few days after the election of a Conservative government in 1979.

(8a) (WW:6.6.79)

((The pronoun "she" refers to the newly elected Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, throughout this extract)).

- 1 Int: 'hhh Supposing ou:r (.) scenario about British Leyland  
2 (.) actually came about. What do you think she would  
3 do: in the circumstances of Mister Edwards coming along  
4 and asking for further state dole.  
5 PC: I don't think Mister Edwards would get another state  
6 dole.  
7 Int: What d'you think Perg.  
8 PW: I think that in the circumstances that you've described  
9 she would e:r give way.=Rather along the: the: the:  
10 the: the Heath line.=So I think that the possibility  
11 of 'hhh having thousands of people laid off in the Midlands

12 which is a very 'hh volatile area I think.= (An) area  
 13 where disagreeable things can easily happen.= Birmingham.=  
 14 Think of that (.) awful place. 'hhhh e::r The thought  
 15 of all those British Leyland workers running rampage.= I  
 16 think that she would probably give way like Heath did.  
 17 Int: I shall restrain myself er from [ saying anything about  
 18 PW: ( )  
 19 Int: your view= of Birmingham. 'hhhh Alright (.) we've got  
 20 a straight disagreement between you on the industrial  
 21 → thing. 'h Let me bring something else up. (.) For both  
 22 of you. 'hhhh What about the civil service? 'hhh All these  
 23 permanent secretaries,= you know they're not great believers  
 24 in radical changes and sharp departures. And they do  
 25 seem to have a great impact on ministers.= As Willie Armstrong  
 26 said. 'hhh Doesn't that worry you Mister Cosgrave?  
 27 PC: I thi:nk 'hhh that is an area which in many respects  
 28 is far more important than any opposition she may meet  
 29 from the trade unions. 'hhhh If Mrs Thatcher does not  
 30 break the civil service (.) she will not succeed.=  
 31 Int: =How d'you mean break the civil service.  
 32 (0.3).  
 33 PC: er Well...(continues)

Here, having explicitly attended to the fact that he has elicited a "straight disagreement" between the two interviewees "on the industrial thing" (lines 19-21), the interviewer proceeds immediately to initiate an exit from the sequence embodying this disagreement by (1) shifting topic to the issue of the civil service (lines 21-26), and then (2) producing a next question on that topic. In next turn, PC confines himself to responding to this question: and thus, by declining to pursue the prior disagreement (e.g. by reasserting his disagreed with position via a pre- or post-answer agenda shift) collaborates with the interviewer in the accomplishment of an exit from it.

An example of an interviewer initiating an exit following a violatively produced first disagreement is located in (10a) where a pay bargaining deal between a Labour government and the TUC is being discussed.

(10a) (WAO:15.5.79)

1 SB: ...and far less on incomes policy 'hh than he claims  
 2 to to be:.=

3 Int: =Do you think the implications of this document are a  
4 (.) tough budget.  
5 SB: 'hhh We:ll 'hh again it is important how it's presented.  
6 I disagree with the idea 'hhhh that you have to have 'h a  
7 budget 'hh to punish workers for wage claims. 'hhh I'm an  
8 opponent of corporal punishment 'hhh of workers who get  
9 wage claims. 'hh But what I do think the budget 'hh is e:r  
10 should do: 'hhh is to make ve- very very clear 'hhh that  
11 there is a limited amount of money. 'hhh That people  
12 who get more 'hh get it at the expense of other workers.  
13 'hh Or at the expense of the unemployed. 'hh And I don't  
14 think 'hhh that if Healey were to be defeated in the  
15 Cabinet 'hh and if the so-called expansionist ministers  
16 were to have their way 'hhhh I don't think we would get  
17 more growth or employment. 'hhh We would get both  
18 inflation 'h and more unemployment. The most important  
19 thing 'hhh is that Mister Healey 'h should stick to his  
20 gu:ns.=  
21 PJ: [ You s ] ee  
22 Int: [ Well I ]  
23 (.)  
24 PJ: I disagree with- with Sam Brittan on a- in a most (.)  
25 fundamental way about this, (.) because (0.2) it may  
26 well be so.=I mean he would arg- Sam Brittan would argue  
27 from a monetarist point of vie:w.=But what Mister Healey  
28 does about the money supply over the next few months 'hhh  
29 will have no bearing whatsoever I would say on the course  
30 of the present wage round.=And thi- this is a matter  
31 of political authority. It will depend upon the degree:  
32 to which 'hhh e:rm trade unionists erm members of trade  
33 unions 'h will consent to be governed by this (.) government,  
34 =and by their own lea:ders.=  
35 Int: → =Now can I ask you whether this (.) deal between the  
36 government and the TUC will do anything to redress the  
37 balance of bargaini::ng powe:r, 'hh between unions and  
38 the rest of the community.=That issue which has 'hhh come  
39 to the forefront of politics in the last few weeks. 'hhhh=  
40 PJ: =No very little I would sa:y,=because u:hm the: uhm I  
41 mean in so far as- as- as- as- as trade unio:ns uhm obey  
42 the- the- the- these codes of practice which have been  
43 put forward by the TUC 'hhh u:hm u:hm with regard to  
44 for example picketing 'hhh the:n erm strikes would be  
45 less u:hm damaging to- to- to- to employers,=and to that  
46 extent I suppose you could argue that the- that the-  
47 the- the balance would be slightly redressed. 'hhh But I  
48 really don't believe that the effect will- will- will-  
49 will be significant,=and certainly not in the shorter  
50 ru:n.=  
51 Int: =Do you agree,  
52 (.)  
53 SB: 'hhhh er I think...(continues)

Here PJ self-selects at a possible completion of SB's answer to the

first question in the extract, and uses the turn he manages to obtain to disagree with SB's views re: monetary policy. Following this, the interviewer produces a question (lines 35-39) which shifts away from the issue of monetary policy per se, and focusses instead on the issue of whether the deal between the government and the TUC will alter "the balance of bargaining power, 'hh between unions and the rest of the community". Accordingly, in confining himself to answering this question (lines 40-50), PJ subsequently collaborates with the interviewer in (1) the accomplishment of a repair on the preceding breach, and in (2) the accomplishment of an exit from the disagreement which was initiated through that breach.

Although exits from sequences embodying disagreements between interviewees are recurrently initiated following a first disagreement, it is by no means unusual to find them being initiated following an nth disagreement. Against this background, two points should be noted with respect to those interviewee-interviewee disagreement sequences which involve the production of more than one disagreement turn. The first is that such sequences are largely progressed through violative utterances, with interviewees opting to step out of their institutionalised footings in order to pursue their disagreements. Second, and relatedly, in contrast to extended disagreement sequences in conversation, such sequences rarely involve the disagreeing parties moderating or, more generally, moving away from their disagreements. Indeed, it is commonly the case that they escalate their disagreements by (1) shifting progressively out of (and often quickly abandoning) their institutionalised footings, and by (2) producing their talk interruptively. The question of why the trajectories of extended interviewee-interviewee disagreement sequences normally exhibit these features

will be addressed shortly. First, however, we will briefly consider two examples.

Our first example is drawn from an interview in which a Tory MP (TD) and a Labour MP (DW) are, respectively, arguing for and against the Conservative government's policy of giving council tenants the right to purchase their accommodation.

(18) (LRC:20.10.80:Simplified)

1 TD: ...You won't have a mixed soc[ i : e t y ( ) ]  
2 Int: [ Aren't you creating ] two nations  
3 though Tony Bea [ mont-Dark. ]  
4 TD: [ N o ] on the contrary surely we're  
5 creating one nation,=we're giving people the right to  
6 stay tenants if they wish to do so. 'hhh That's creating  
7 one nation. 'hhh What creates two nations is saying that  
8 'hh a council tenant in some way or othe:r 'hh is  
9 somewhat inferior to anybody else.=  
10 DW: =B [ ut- ]  
11 TD: [ But ] this proves it is no:t.=  
12 DW: =Yes but what about those council tenants that Tony must  
13 take into consideration 'h who live in flats,=and very  
14 very few flats are being sold off, 'h in Birmingham for  
15 example the number of flats actually sold 'hh could be  
16 counted on one of both hands. 'hh It's the better type  
17 of home- of accommodation. 'And if there's a right (.)  
18 er as Tony has been telling us 'hher er a fundamental right  
19 apparently for tenants to buy 'h why not for private  
20 tenants. 'hh When the matter was raised in the House  
21 of Commons 'hh when we asked the Tory ministers 'h why not  
22 give p- (.) private tenants the right to bu:y 'h then of  
23 course we were told it's out of the question. 'h why not  
24 give (.) council=  
25 TD: =We'll look-]  
26 DW: [ pri ]vate tenan[ ts as well ]  
27 TD: [ Well no:w ma ] y I say this ( )  
28 to the:: to- to this subject,=i- it's a very interesting  
29 point because all can't do it 'hhh David says none should  
30 do it. 'hhh erm If I may say- if you work on that basis  
31 you're alwa:ys going to have a a-a-a- a very divisive  
32 society,=what we're trying to do 'hhh is to give people  
33 the right to live their li:ves, 'hhh not the councils  
34 dictating whether the doo:rs 'hh all the doors are white,  
35 =or all the doors are blue, 'hh and it's not just the  
36 best (.) houses,=when 'hh I was chairman of housing here  
37 in nineteen seventy-eight in Birmingham 'hhh and (.)  
38 there were many hou:ses er in the nineteen twenties and  
39 early thirties that (are being) sold. 'hh They're not

40 just the modern one[s.]  
41 DW: [B]ut how many fl[ats have been sold off.]  
42 TD: [And- may I say you can]  
43 si- 'hh woul[d- ( )-]  
44 DW: [H o w] many flats ha[ve] been sold off and=  
45 TD: [Well]  
46 DW: =es[pecially those flats in] multi-sto[rey blocks.]  
47 TD: [So because ( )-] [So bec]ause  
48 flats are=  
49 ( ): =mhm=  
50 TD: =aren't selling well it means that people who live in  
51 council houses shouldn't have the right to bu[y the]m.  
52 DW: [No:]  
53 TD: =I don't see the logic of th[at.]  
54 Int: → [Le-] let's talk about the  
55 right to buy in terms of money thou:gh, [er s]ome tenants  
56 ( ): [ ( ) ]  
57 Int: not a great deal but some have found that the: 'hhh offers  
58 of discounts are very attractive but when they get into  
59 the owning market as they do (.) they find that repairs  
60 are not discounted and that they're something they  
61 re[all]y can't handle. This is a growing prob[lem] isn't it.  
62 ( ): [ ( ) ]  
63 (DW): [mhm]  
64 TD: 'hhh Well it u- it- it- I mean when you talk about this  
65 as a growing problem I think it's something like 'hhh you  
66 know between fi:ve and ten a week er- e:r are being aske:d  
67 to: 'hh for the councils to buy their houses back. 'hh I  
68 don't think that matters,

Here an interviewee-interviewee disagreement - having been initiated by DW through the production of a violative post-answer turn (at lines 12-24/26), and then pursued by the disagreed with interviewee TD through a second violative turn (at lines 27-40) - is clearly escalated. For, having directed their initial violative disagreement turns to the non-disagreed with news interviewer, the disagreeing interviewees abandon their institutionalised footings from line 41 onwards and move into outright, unmediated disagreement.

In this case, then, neither of the disagreeing interviewees opt to moderate their positions, or otherwise move away from or out of disagreement. Rather they pursue, and indeed escalate, their disagreement until the interviewer steps in (at line 54) and, in restoring

the standard question-answer format, asks a question which initiates a new topical line.

Our second example is taken from an interview in which the interviewees JN and OM are speaking, respectively, for and against a proposed amendment to the 1967 Abortion Act. If it were accepted by parliament, this amendment would operate to make it more difficult for women to obtain abortions.

(19) (AP:22.1.80:Simplified)

- 1 Int: So you're saying that- that- that people do: make a  
2 convenience of abortion. Is that [what you're sa] yi:ng.=  
3 JN: [Well I-]  
4 JN: =thi- This is what the evidence: sa::ys.  
5 Int: And Onna you would say that that's [not true:.]  
6 OM: [Well (.) I] think what  
7 'hh erm Jill's frequently referred to the select committee,=  
8 =I think we must (0.2) bear in mind that that select  
9 committee was entirely composed of anti-abortionists,  
10 JN: Oh [no.]  
11 OM: [ 'hh] and took over- yes it was. 'hh And took evidence:  
12 from anti-abortionists. 'hhh Secondly Jill is quite  
13 wrong to say that the doctors decide on the meanings  
14 of the words serious and substantially. Not at all. 'h The  
15 courts would have to decide that 'h in the long ru:n. 'hhh  
16 And what we fear would happen 'hhh is that with those two  
17 terms in the Bi:ll 'h that a private prosecution could  
18 be brought against a doctor saying that he performed  
19 er 'hhh an abortion outside the terms of the la:w. 'hhh  
20 And then the matter would go to court, =and would eventua [lly]=  
21 JN: [No.]=  
22 OM: =have to go to: the House of Lo:rd's, 'hhh its court of  
23 appeal could take five yea:rs, 'hhh the ai:s:m of altering  
24 the clause is to cut down abortio:ns as (.) the supporters  
25 of the Bill say by about two-thirds. 'hh  
26 JN: Well no. I- I think rea:lly it's ridiculous to say that  
27 courts are brought in [at the] stage when abortion =  
28 OM: [Oh Yes.]  
29 JN: =is being carried=out. [They're not. 'hhh (The matter is for) ]=  
30 OM: [No. No. ( ]=  
31 OM: =after the event.=  
32 JN: =The matter is for a doctor to decide:. [ 'hh And as =  
33 OM: [But the =  
34 JN: = Doctor ( ) has said in othe:r e:r other operations=  
35 OM: = But the Doctor ( )- ]=  
36 JN: =particularly cosmetic ones= 'hhh he's quite capable of  
37 deciding (.) what is serious.  
38 Int: → We:ll can we now move onto the: the third area; and sadly

39 we've only a few minutes le:ft, 'h h h h and that is the:  
 40 the clause: which wants to seve:r the links between (0.2)  
 41 e:rm agencies (.) and abortion clinics. (.) Jill Night  
 42 can I have you:r 'hh thoughts on the implications of  
 43 that. [ 'hh Why: ] you think that's necessary.  
 44 JN: [ 'h h h a- ]  
 45 JN: Well I think that it's obviou:s that if you have one group  
 46 of people 'h h h telling you you need a certain operation 'h h h  
 47 linked with closely with the ones who are actually per-  
 48 forming it 'h h h e:r there is a tie up which is unaccepta [ ble,=i- ]  
 49 Int: " You 'd ]  
 50 go as fa:r as- would you say it was vested interest.  
 51 JN: ' hh Well I think...(continues)

Here, then, a disagreement which is initiated by OM in her answer to the second question in the extract is pursued and escalated until the interviewer intervenes (at line 38) and re-establishes her institutionalised stance vis-a-vis the interviewees through the production of a question that initiates a topical shift.

Returning now to the question of why interviewees regularly opt to pursue their disagreements through violative sequences such as those in (18) and (19), we may suggest that this aspect of their conduct is largely the product of the empirical and normative expectancy that, in the event of interviewees becoming engaged in repeated turn-type/turn-order violations, an interviewer will ultimately step in to restore the standard question-answer format: that is, that an interviewer will reassert his or her rights as a report elicitor, and thus re-engage in what is after all his or her institutional task - the questioning of interviewees (c.f. Chapters 4 and 5).<sup>3</sup>

The significance of this expectation is that, in the context of extended interviewee-interviewee disagreement sequences, an interviewer will in producing a question either (i) initiate a shift from unmediated to mediated disagreement by providing for the continuation of a disagreement within the standard question-answer format or, more generally,



(ii) initiate an exit from a disagreement per se by seeking to shift the topical focus of the interviewees talk. The point, then, is that in contrast to speakers in conversation, interviewees can pursue or escalate their disagreements confident in the knowledge that they will not have to negotiate their own way out of them. They can, in other words, maximise their disagreements because in the end they can rely upon a non-disagreed with third party, the interviewer, to intervene and get them off the hook.

#### 6.4 The Organisation of Interviewer-Interviewee Disagreement: Some Brief Considerations

Instances of interviewers overtly disagreeing with interviewees' statements and arguments are extremely rare. The reasons for this, as was noted in Chapter 4, are two-fold. First, because it specifies that they should confine themselves to asking questions, the news interview turn-taking system does not provide for interviewers performing stated agreements or disagreements. Second, and relatedly, due largely to the fact that they are required by law to maintain a posture of formal neutrality, interviewers systematically refrain from initiating breaches in order to perform one or other of these activities.

However, although interviewers systematically avoid initiating disagreements with interviewees, interviewees do on occasions initiate disagreements with interviewers. This normally involves them in either (a) challenging or disagreeing with one or more of the presuppositions of a question or (b) challenging or disagreeing with proposedly factual information that has been produced in a question preface.

An example of an interviewee disagreeing with one of the presuppositions of a question is observable in (20), in which TD overtly con-

tests the assumption that local authorities are being forced to sell (council houses).

(20) (LRC:20.10.80)

Int: Tony Beaumont-Dark should local authorities be forced to sell.

TD: → 'hh Well they're not being forced to se:ll.=

Another example is located in (21) where, as was noted in the previous chapter, AS disagrees with the presupposition that he is a Marxist.

(21) (WAO:13.3.79)

Int: 'hhh er What's the difference between your Marxism and Mister McGarhey's Communism.

AS: → 'hh er The difference is that it's the press that constantly call me a Ma:rxist when I do not, (.) and never have (.) er given that description of myself.

An example of an interviewee disagreeing with materials which are produced in a question preface can be seen in (22). Thus here, in his response to the interviewer's question, SG disagrees with the interviewer's proposedly factual prefatory assertion (lines 1-3) that the chances of the referenced elections "actually (being) held in Rhodesia::" are 'barely' fifty-fifty.

(22) (PM:2.11.79)

1 Int: But uh er at the moment there i::s barely a fifty-fifty  
2 chance: that the kind of elections you're talking about 'hh  
3 will actually be held in Rhodesia:: 'hhh u:hm And that  
4 perhaps there will be a continuation of the wa:r,=a  
5 heightening of the wa::r, 'hhh which e::r in the end  
6 the Patriotic Front might wi:n. 'hhh Do you think the:n  
7 that in those circumstances there might be free and fair  
8 elections in Rhodesia?  
9 (1.0)

10 SG: Well if the war is wo::n e:r thi- the: path fo:rwa:rd  
11 would have been a military one.. 'hhWhat we're trying to  
12 ensure: is that the path forward is not a military one. 'hhh  
13 e:r That the wa:y to independence and peace (0.2) would  
14 → be: around the conference table. 'hhh er I myself would (.)  
15 not accept you:r u:h (1.4) estimate of the chances.=I  
16 would not put them as low as fifty-fifty.

Another example of an interviewee disagreeing with background mater-

ials is exhibited in (23). In this case, however, rather than being produced in a response to a subsequent question, the disagreement is initiated during their production.

(23) (AP:7.3.79)

Int: 'hhhh Lord Longford erm (0.5) we- we- we do take a lot  
of trouble (0.8) rehabilitating (0.5) criminals, 'hhh e:r  
[and long]  
LL: [Well I d] on't- I d[on't ( )-]  
Int: [long t e r m] schemes for criminals.=  
LL: → =No I do [n't agree with that at all (sir)]  
Int: [But we don't seem ]to [ ( )-]  
LL: → [Sorry.] er  
Int: [I- I see.Well-] don't agree with that statement not a- no=  
LL: → =way. [We d] o very little to rehabilitate criminal [s]  
Int: [Well-] [W]ell  
...(continues)

These observations can be developed upon a little by noting that, in the event of an interviewee disagreeing with an interviewer, an interviewer's impartiality may become open to question. For if a version of a state of affairs which is either described or presupposed by an interviewer (in the course of asking a question) is not accepted as being factual, but rather is disputed, then he may find himself in the position of having been heard to have chosen one from a number of competing versions of that state of affairs. And, if it is proposed that he has done this, then it may also be proposed that the selection of that particular version reflects his personal opinion, and/or the stance of the broadcasting organisation, on the matter to hand.

Against this background, in the event of their version of a state of affairs being contested, and thus rendered equivocal as to its factual status, interviewers generally take one of three courses of action. Very briefly, they either (1) reassert the factual status of the contested version, (2) account for their having taken the contested version

to be factual, or (3) turn the contested materials into a topic in their own right through the production of a question. The crucial point to notice about these three alternative courses of action, then, is that, although only one of them necessarily involves an interviewer in maintaining the footing of a questioner, they all involve an interviewer in handling an interviewee's disagreement without his abandoning his legally required posture of formal neutrality.

Several examples of interviewers undertaking one or other of these courses of action follow.

Our first example involves a disagreed with interviewer reasserting the factual status of a contested version of a state of affairs. Thus here the interviewer responds to the interviewee's disagreement with what he has proposed in his question to be factual information by asserting that he has done no more than describe "the way things are:".

(24) (AP:28.9.81)

Int: ...Isn't the overall impa:ct of this whole procedure we've seen 'hhh to: remind the country that the Labour Party is very largely in the grip of trade unions whose procedures are both 'h ramshackle and undemocratic, 'hh and to call what's just happened 'hh an election of a deputy leader 'h is actually a farce:. [ And has just ] demonstrated=  
 NK: [ But- But- ]  
 Int: ='hh to the country at large how the [ Labour Party's =  
 NK: [ Yeah. tha- =  
 Int: =affairs are conducted.]  
 NK: = tha- tha- that']s good trade union bashing stuff  
 but it's absolutely irr [elevant ( )=  
 Int: → [It's not trade union=  
 NK: [=( ) (I'll tell you, ) ]  
 Int: → =bashing at all,=it's just des] cribing the way things [ are:]  
 NK: [ I-I ]  
 know. But let me- let me tell you why...(continues)

In our second example, an interviewer opts to account for his having treated a contested version of a state of affairs as factual. Thus here, following TD's disagreement with the presupposition

that local authorities are being forced to sell (council houses), the interviewer provides a basis for his having presupposed that this was the existing state of affairs: that basis being that the local authorities themselves appear to believe it to be so.

(20a) (LRC:20.10.80)

Int: Tony Beaumont-Dark should local authorities be forced to sell.  
 TD: 'hh Well they're not being forced to sell.=  
 Int: → =They feel as if they are I thin [k.]  
 TD: [W] ell it...(continues)

In our third example, an interviewer once again provides grounds for his believing (or for his having believed) a disagreed with version of a state of affairs to be true. Thus here, following the interviewee's interruptively produced disagreement with his statement that "we do take a lot of trouble (0.8) rehabilitating (0.5) criminals", the interviewer provides a basis for his having produced this as a 'statement of fact': that basis being the proposedly large amount of money which is spent on the matter in question.

(23a)

Int: 'hhhh Lord Longford erm (0.5) we- we- we do take a lot of trouble (0.8) rehabilitating (0.5) criminals, 'hhh e:r  
 LL: [and long] [Well I d] on't- I d'on't ( )-]  
 Int: [long t e r m] schemes for criminals.=  
 LL: =No I do [n't agree with that at all (sir)]  
 Int: [But we don't seem ] to [( )-]  
 LL: [Sorry. ]er  
 S [orry ( ) I] don't agree with that statement not a- No=  
 Int: I- I see. Well-]  
 LL: =way. [We d] o very little to rehabilitate criminal [s.]  
 Int: → [Well-] [W] ell  
 we seem to spend a lot of money on it even if we do little.=

Our fourth example involves an interviewer turning contested materials into a topic in their own right via the production of a question. Thus here the interviewer responds to the interviewee's disagreement (with his proposedly factual prefatory assertion that "there i::s barely a

fifty-fifty chance" that the referenced elections will be held) by re-  
questing that the interviewee state what he believes the chances of  
success to be.

(22a) (PM:2.11.79)

Int: But uh er at the moment there i::s barely a fifty-fifty  
chance: that of the kind of elections you're talking about  
'hh will actually be held in Rhodesia::.. 'hhh u:hm And  
that perhaps there will be a continuation of the wa:r,=a  
heightening of the wa::r, 'hhh which e::r in the end the  
Patriotic Front might wi:n. 'hhh Do you think the:n that  
in those circumstances there might be free and fair elec-  
tions in Rhodesia:?

(1.0)

SG: Well if the war is wo::n e:r thi- the: path fo:rwa:rd  
would have been a military one:. 'hh What we're trying  
to ensure: is that the path forward is not a military  
one. 'hhh e:r That the wa:y to independence and peace  
(0.2) would be: around the conference table. 'hhh er I  
myself would (.) not accept you:r u:h (1.4) estimate of  
the chances.=I would not put them as low as fifty-fifty.

'hhh [er]

Int: → [Wh] at would you put them a:t.

SG: I- I would put them at...(continues)

And in our final example, a disagreed with interviewer once again  
turns the contested materials into a topic in their own right:

(25) (NN:14.10.81)

Int: ...I couldn't help notici:ng when er 'hhh Sir Geoffrey  
Howe was speaking this afternoon how while all your other  
ministerial colleagues were clapping er 'h during his  
speech in between many of the things he was saying 'hh you  
hardly clapped at all.=You hardly applauded at all.=Sitting  
as you were beside Mister Heath. 'hhh [Do you:]  
[Come o] ff it.

Int: → du- (.) Well is it not true.=

FP: =cu- Come off it.=( ) I clapped...(continues)

In sum: It has been seen in this brief section that interviewees  
sometimes disagree with the proposedly factual versions of states of  
affairs which interviewers presuppose or describe in the course of asking  
their questions. It has also been seen, however, that interviewers  
normally handle such cases without abandoning the posture of formal

neutrality which they are required by law to maintain.

## 6.5 Summary

In this chapter, we have pointed to a range of differences between the organisation of disagreement in news interviews and the organisation of disagreement in ordinary conversation. In so doing, we have proposed that these differences are due largely to considerations which arise from the turn-type pre-allocated character of the turn-taking system for news interview interaction. The findings reported in this part of the thesis, then, starkly illustrate how the sequential organisations through which certain activities are managed in mundane conversation may be substantially modified or re-shaped in an institutional context due to the use of different turn-taking practices and the different footings associated with those practices.

Footnotes to Chapter Six

1. One of the reasons for this is introduced in Chapter 7.
2. It should perhaps be noted here that the turn initial component "well" which, as noted in Chapter 2, is associated with the production of dispreferreds in mundane conversation does occur quite regularly in the context of interviewee-interviewee disagreements. However, the systematics of its use in this environment are as yet far from clear.
3. As seen earlier, this expectancy is underpinned by the fact that repeated turn-type/ turn order violations seriously threaten or undermine an interviewer's rights and competence as a report elicitor.



## Chapter Seven

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

#### 7.1 Introduction

In the preceding three chapters, we have described a number of the basic procedures that participants employ in recursively creating and maintaining news interview contexts on a turn-by-turn, sequence-by-sequence basis. In this final chapter, we briefly explore the relationship between some of these procedures and the legal, institutional and other normative constraints on news interview conduct. In so doing, we begin by offering a number of observations on some of the ways in which news interviews differ from other types of broadcast interviews, particularly with respect to the different footings that interviewers are required to maintain *within them*. Following this we then discuss a range of considerations which serve to constrain news interviewer and news interviewee conduct. Finally, we conclude by outlining a range of possibilities for further research on the news interview.

#### 7.2 Other Forms of Broadcast Interviewing

News interviewing differs from other types of broadcast interviewing in a number of important respects. In this section, we will point to some of these differences, focusing first on interviews that are conducted by guest (as opposed to professional) interviewers, and then on celebrity and chat show interviews.

The practice of using prominent figures - such as politicians, authors, academics and newspaper journalists - as guest interviewers dates back to the years of the BBC's monopoly, and was particularly

prevalent in the early 1950s (Wyndham Goldie, 1977). Due in part to the growth in numbers of professional broadcasters over the past thirty years, however, this practice has not evolved into a major broadcasting convention. Rather it has remained an occasional feature of television and radio output, and it is at the present time largely confined to Arts magazines and special in-depth interview programmes.

In contrast to news interviewers who, as we have seen are formally obliged to remain impartial, guest interviewers are often licenced to express opinions and take positions. This is due partly to the fact that, unlike news interviewing, guest interviewing tends to focus on topics which concern neither matters of public policy nor matters of public controversy. More generally, and irrespective of topical considerations, however, it is a product of the fact that whereas news interviewers, as professional broadcasters, are inevitably viewed as acting on behalf of the broadcasting organisations who employ them, it is possible for guest interviewers, by virtue of their independent status, to be presented as having been commissioned to ask questions in a personal capacity.

One consequence of this is that interviews conducted by guest interviewers often involve the use of turn-taking systems which differ to the one used in and for news interviews; with, for example, the constraints on interviewers' turns being relaxed so as to provide for an interviewer overtly proposing some commitment to the truth or adequacy of an interviewee's responses via the production of assessments, news receipts and newsmarks etc.. This was so, for instance, in a series of in-depth interviews with well-known personalities and public figures which were conducted by the newspaper columnist and critic Bernard Levin

on BBC television in 1980. Thus, as the following extracts from one of these interviews illustrates, although his conduct did in some instances resemble that of a news interviewer in that he confined himself to asking questions:

(1) (The Levin Interviews: 1980)

Int: → Do you feel pessimistic about the phenomenon you're talking about?  
RD: Deeply pessimistic.  
Int: → Do you think we are in fact going to slide down that hill?  
RD: Yes. I think we are sliding down. Unless we pull ourselves together... (continues)

Levin frequently departed from the conventions of interviewing as defined in news interviews by taking up overt positions with regard to the arguments and standpoints expressed by his subjects, e.g. by agreeing/disagreeing with them:<sup>1</sup>

(2) (The Levin Interviews: 1980)

RD: ... but every branch of our society (.) professional people working class people politicians (.) they speak too often with the language of violence and hate and conflict.  
Int: → I- I thi- I entirely agree with you. But there's a point here which you... (continues).

The point, then, is that in broadcast interviews featuring guest interviewers the constraints on interviewers' turns may be looser than those on interviewers' turns in news interviews due to their not necessarily having to enact their role on an impartial footing.

Turning now to celebrity and chat show interviews with film stars, television personalities, comedians, authors, politicians, etc., we may begin by recalling that the news interview turn-taking system provides not only for the withholding of assessments, news receipts and newsmarks

(which may involve some overt commitment to the truth or adequacy of prior talk), but also for the withholding of continuers (which do not) at the possible completions of interviewees' turns. This feature of the news interview has been well discussed by Heritage (1985a) who argues that the withholding of continuers (and also of other types of receipt objects) is a central means through which news interview talk is designed so as to identify it as being expressly produced for the consumption of overhearers. This is so, he says, because by withholding receipt objects such as these an interviewer can (i) "decline the role of report recipient while maintaining the role of report elicitor", and thus (ii) "permit viewers to view themselves as the primary, if unaddressed, recipients of the talk that emerges" (ibid. 100).

Now, against this background, leaving the issue of impartiality (and thus the production/non-production of receipt objects such as assessments, news receipts and newsmarks) to one side for a moment, it is noticeable that, in stark contrast to news interviews, many celebrity and chat show interviews do involve interviewers in producing continuers. This is the case, for example, in the following extract which is taken from, and typical of, a televised celebrity interview with the American novelist Erica Jong:

(3) (AP:17.10.80)

Int: You are not going to be trapped at home with a child are you. You are now economically free. You can do what you like. You can have other people look after her. Is that at [all] a dilemma for you.  
EJ: I  
EJ: It is a dilemma of course.  
Int: → Mh [m]  
EJ: [y] ou see the last three months I've been away from home a lot. And I've been going home mostly on weekends.

Int: → W<sub>hen</sub>] I=  
          → [mhm]  
EJ:    =was travelling in the States. And I missed my daughter  
          terribly.  
Int: → Mhm  
EJ:    And er I've had many lonely nights in hotel rooms when I've  
          said to myself what on earth am I doing. I have this  
          beautiful two year-old at home. And there I am on the  
          road.  
Int:    But what are you doing then?

(interview continues)

As to why the production of continuers turns out to be a constituent feature of interviewer conduct in many celebrity and chat show interviews it may be suggested that this is bound up with the fact that, as the following quote from the chat show host Michael Parkinson clearly indicates, interviewers in such contexts are often concerned with creating the illusion that they are engaged in an intimate chat.<sup>2</sup>

It's very difficult to create that illusion which you have between myself and my guest that actually it's an intimate chat between me and them and nobody else is watching; when after all there's four hundred people in the studio; there's a million quid's worth of technology surrounding them; there's a microphone in every orifice. But we'll have a cosy fireside chat. It's difficult. But sometimes you manage to create that illusion.

The production of continuers, then, would in this light seem to be one way in which an attempt is made by celebrity and chat show interviewers to create the impression that they are engaged in an intimate discussion. For by producing these objects, they move to a more conversational footing (than that which is maintained, e.g., in news interviews) by engaging in a regular conversational practice. And, in so doing, they go some way towards casting the audience in the role of eavesdroppers as opposed to primary recipients.<sup>3</sup>

Returning to the issue of impartiality, it is noteworthy that receipt objects such as assessments, news receipts and newsmarks - whose production, as Heritage (ibid.) notes, would further serve to identify the talk as more conversational, but which (in contrast to continuers) may additionally involve the abandonment of a neutral posture - are used much less frequently than are continuers by interviewers in celebrity and chat show interviews. In this connection, it may be noted that the production/non-production of these objects appears to turn, to some degree, on the character of the topic under discussion. Thus when interviewees are telling stories and jokes etc. the interviewers often produce not only continuers but also assessments and the like, and thereby take up a strongly conversational posture. When matters of public policy and controversy are being discussed, however, they are usually much more guarded in their use of these objects.

This latter phenomenon is, of course, unsurprising. For, at the end of the day, unlike guest interviewers, celebrity and chat show interviewers are (usually) professional broadcasters. And, as such, any overt commitment on their part to the truth or adequacy of interviewees' views in such contexts is likely to be viewed as subverting the broadcasting organisations impartiality and thus as inappropriate.

To sum up: In news interviews, interviewers normally maintain the footing of an impartial questioner who is engaged in talk that is being expressly produced for the broadcast audience. This, however, is not necessarily the case with interviewers in other types of television and radio interview. And, as a result, the constraints on interviewers' turns in the latter contexts may be variously looser than those in news interviews, so that, in addition to asking questions, interviewers may

also appropriately produce such objects as assessments, news receipts, newsmarks and/or continuers.

### 7.3 News Interviewer Conduct

The ground rules that inform the conduct of news interviewers in asking their questions are, as has been indicated, influenced by a range of factors. In this section, we will briefly discuss three of the more important of these.

The determination of what styles of news interview questioning are acceptable in any given era turns to a large extent on the character of the prevailing interpretation of the concept of impartiality in broadcast journalism. Thus, as seen in Chapter 2, the development of news interviewing in the United Kingdom can be described in terms of four general phases. First, there were the monopoly years during which a restricted interpretation of impartiality meant that interviewers, regardless of topical considerations and the identity of their interviewees, asked only the most straightforward questions. Second, there was the latter half of the 1950s when, due largely to the impact of commercial television, the adoption of a more liberal conception of impartiality created a climate in which it was possible for broadcast journalists to introduce and develop unrehearsed, investigative styles of interviewing. Third, there were the 1960s which, in the context of a further extension of the freedom of broadcasters, saw the frontiers of interviewing being still further extended. And finally, there is the period from the early 1970s to the present day during which a gradual retrenchment in broadcasting, and the corresponding adoption of a narrower conception of impartiality, has been reflected in a somewhat

more cautious approach to investigative broadcast journalism in general and investigative news interviewing in particular.

A second factor which plays a role in the determination of the ground rules for news interviewing is that of the extent to which the public deem different styles of questioning to be acceptable. One of the BBC's major interviewers David Dimbleby describes the impact of public opinion on news interviewer conduct in the following terms:

I think that the changes that have happened in interviewing happen only partly because interviewers decide to extend the frontier of interviewing. They happen equally because audiences, viewers, learn about the techniques of interviewing themselves and are prepared to accept changes or alterations. Don't find them repellent. So the pace of change is not just interviewers seeking new ways of prodding and pricking their interviewee. But it's whether they think the audience will be simply siding with the interviewee as a result.<sup>4</sup>

The question of whether interviewing techniques are likely to be viewed as acceptable by or to an audience is closely tied up with the status of the subject in a given interview. The issue, in other words, is not just one of whether interviewing techniques per se are acceptable, but also one of whether they are appropriate in the context of interviews with specific types of interviewee. Thus, as Dimbleby goes on to note:

You're limited very much by the bounds of decency, or at least I feel I am; about what it's proper to ask people; about how far it's proper to push people; about whether people fall into the category where they can expect this very tough kind of interviewing, like politicians with whom on the whole there are no holds barred, or whether they fall into a category of people who, not expecting that and not being equipped to cope with that, shouldn't be subjected to those kind of techniques. So there are a whole range of restraints and you have to adapt the interview to the person you're talking to in order that the audience and he and indeed God in Heaven decides that you haven't behaved unjustly. I think that's terribly important.<sup>5</sup>



Public opinion, and relatedly the identity of the subject of an interview, then, also play a part in shaping the parameters of acceptability in news interviewer conduct.

A third factor which constrains the conduct of news interviewers concerns the willingness of interviewees, especially politicians and other public figures, to accept different styles and forms of questioning. In this connection, we may start by noting that while interviewees have from the mid-1950s onwards usually been willing to be interviewed on an impromptu and, where relevant, investigative basis, they have also displayed a growing disposition to resist and complain about what they regard as inappropriate news interviewer conduct. This trend began during the 1960s when an increasing number of prominent figures started to become disenchanted with and, in some cases, openly hostile to, the investigative news interview. That they did so was partly a product of the unhappiness of many politicians with the way in which broadcast journalism in general conducted its affairs during this period (c.f. Chapter 2). In addition, however, it was also due to the fact that, whereas in the late 1950s reputations could be enhanced by surviving the newly introduced provocative styles of news interviewing, as these styles became the norm in the 1960s there was less credit to be gained from facing up to them; and, as such, they inevitably became less attractive to those who were subjected to them.

During the past fifteen years the disenchantment with the news interview has if anything increased, with interviewees who are subjected to investigative interviewing becoming much more prickly and sensitive with regard to the behaviour of their interviewers. Two of the more important consequences of this development are as follows. First,

interviewees, and in particular politicians, have shown an increasing disposition to challenge the rights of interviewers to pursue lines of questioning which are not to their liking. Usually this involves them in refusing to answer questions on the grounds that they are inappropriate, as in the following case (from April 1972) in which James Callaghan refuses to discuss the issue of whether the deputy leader of the Labour Party, Roy Jenkins, should resign:

(3) (TVI)

JC: Mister Day you've been in interviewer for a long time (.) and you knew before you even phrased the question thatchu wouldn't get me to comment on that particular matter (.) in the light of what I've said to you.=

Int: =U:h  
(.)

JC: Ha- have another try if you like butchu won't get any further with it.=Why not turn to a more profitable line.=

Int: =Because it's a matter of great interest

JC: [ ( ) ] Well in that case you'd better discuss it with Mister Jenkins, but you're not going to get me to make statements that you'll throw at Mister Jenkins and try to set us at each other's e:ars.= I'm not going to take part in that game to satisfy a television panel.

Int: .hhh  
(.)

JC: Now let's turn to something else.=

Int: No do- do you think that a deputy leader (0.3) .hh who is in [ in ( ) ]

JC: [ No I'm not answering ] any questions about what a deputy leader should or should not do.=Now please go on to something else.

On occasion, however, they go so far as to terminate an interview. As seen in Chapter 4, John Nott did this when, in the course of being interviewed in his capacity as Minister of Defence in 1982, he objected to the questioning of the doyen of British political interviewers, Robin Day. Another well-known case occurred during the 1979 General Election campaign when James Callaghan, the then Prime Minister, took exception to

The basic constraint on news interviewees is, of course, that they should confine themselves to answering interviewers' questions. As was seen in Chapter 2, this constraint in fact meant little prior to the mid-1950s since interviewees were able either to prearrange their interviews or else, in the context of impromptu interviewing, to do more or less whatever they liked with impunity. The situation changed radically, however, with the introduction of the unrehearsed investigative news interview in the latter half of the 1950s. Thus, since this time, the conduct of interviewees has been influenced by the facts that (1) they are rarely given notice of the questions they are to be asked, and that (2) interviewers have shown a willingness to pursue answers and to thereby draw attention to the accountability of failures to answer. Accordingly, whereas the deferential interviewers of the monopoly years customarily permitted interviewees a free hand not only to decline to answer their questions, but also to breach the standard news interview format in order to shift topic, the investigative interviewers of the past thirty years have displayed a willingness to sanction and resist such manoeuvres.

Over time, then, the limit to what interviewers are willing to let interviewees get away with has changed considerably. In essence, this change has involved interviewers in seeking to hold their interviewees on a much tighter rein than was the case during the years of the BBC's monopoly. Thus since the mid-1950s interviewers have displayed a willingness both to press for answers to their questions and to resist attempts to subvert their rights as report elicitors re. the organisation of topic.

Interviewees, however, not only have to take account of the acceptability of their behaviour to news interviewers. They have to also take account of the likely reactions of the broadcast audience, with whom they are generally concerned with creating a favourable impression. And here too the bounds of acceptability have shifted considerably.

Thus during the era of deferential and pre-arranged interviewing, because the conduct of interviewees in treating questions at best as mere topic headings was rarely, if ever, treated as accountable by the interviewers themselves, it was rarely, if ever, viewed as such by the public at large. However, once interviewers from the mid-1950s onwards began both to pursue answers and to resist interviewees' agenda shifting manoeuvres, audience expectations and attitudes were re-shaped. For, with interviewers treating them as accountable, the actions of interviewees in declining to answer questions and/or shifting the topical focus of their talk became accountably noticeable to those who watched or listened. And as such, these actions could perhaps for the first time reflect unfavourably upon their authors.

Since the inception of unrehearsed investigative interviewing, then, two related sets of constraints have influenced the conduct of news interviewees. The first is that they will generally expect to find any refusals to answer or agenda shifting manoeuvres being resisted, sanctioned and thus treated as accountable by their interviewers. And the second is that in taking such courses of action they run the risk of appearing in a less than favourable light insofar as the television or radio audience is concerned.

In the context of the modern news interview it is thus not only a matter of how far an interviewer will allow an interviewee to go in

avoiding answering questions and shifting topic. For the issue also arises as to what extent an interviewee can engage in these types of behaviour before the benefits which derive from them are outweighed by the possibility of their creating a disadvantageous impression on the broadcast audience. ..

#### 7.5 The Current Status of the News Interview

As was indicated in Chapter 2, the recent retrenchment in broadcasting has had important implications for the conduct of news interviews. First, in accord with broadcast journalism in general, news interviews have for the most part regressed from arenas in which public controversies were likely to be created into areas in which existing public controversies are merely reported and discussed. This development is exemplified in the fact that, while aggressive, indepth 'man-to-man' interviews have tended if anything to decrease in numbers, there has been a steady growth in the use of panel interviews in which representatives of different standpoints register their conflicting opinions.

Second, not only have styles of news interviewing become more circumspect, but they have also largely evolved into a collection of long-standing conventions, which have undergone little change during the past decade. As a result, the investigative interview has arguably ceased to be as sharp an instrument as it once was. For, as styles of news interviewing have become institutionalised, a growing number of interviewees have become conversant with a range of techniques through which it is possible for them to evade, overtly refuse to answer or, more

generally, draw the sting out of interviewers' questions without necessarily appearing 'indecisive', 'deceitful' or incompetent.

With this said, however, this development - which has been accelerated to some extent by a growth in the numbers of television schools, primers for prospective interviewees and public relations advisors - should not necessarily be read as a sign that a major decline in the status of the news interview is currently underway. For not only does the interview remain an important and potent means of eliciting information, but even some of the most experienced subjects continue to have difficulty in fending off the more persistent of the present crop of investigative interviewers. Moreover, despite the growing tendency of political leaders to limit their appearances in news interview contexts, and to engage instead in 'image building' via televised walkabouts and visits, the news interview is still an extremely important medium of political communication. What we may currently be witnessing therefore is not so much a process which will culminate in the eclipse of the news interview, as a process which, in the short-term at least, will probably result in a marginal reduction in its significance.

#### 7.6 Analysing News Interviews: Some Prospects for the Development of Further Research

As we have seen, the news interview is a relatively recent social invention and has undergone rapid and dynamic development over the past thirty years. On the evidence to hand there can be little doubt that it will continue to assume a significant role in the transmission of information and opinion for the foreseeable future. It therefore merits more extended and detailed analysis than can reasonably be attempted by a

single researcher in the context of a preliminary investigation. Accordingly, we conclude this thesis with some observations about a range of possibilities for further research in this area.

Due to the dearth of previous studies explicitly directed to the news interview as a social form, the present study of its basic organisational properties has necessarily been exploratory in character. An obvious consequence of this is that many of the features of news interview conduct remain to be examined. In particular the analysis presented in Chapter 5 of some of the types of interactional work that interviewers and interviewees accomplish within the standard news interview format could be developed in a number of important respects. For example, one issue which warrants analytical attention is that of the ways in which such activities as accusations and blamings are accomplished by interviewers in their questions and dealt with by interviewees in their answers. Moreover, it might also be revealing to compare the modes of questioning that are used in different kinds of news interview contexts. For if, as appears to be the case, such activities as probing and pursuing - and even on occasion accusing, blaming and challenging - are accomplished not only in overtly investigative interviews but also, for example, in some types of human interest interviews, then the question arises as to whether they are accomplished differently; and if they are, in what ways and for what reasons. This type of analysis would be of special interest given that the present study has been primarily concerned with the modes of questioning employed by investigative political interviewers.

With respect to the organisation of disagreement between news interviewees, future work might usefully consider both the relationship

between the design of turns and their sequential positioning, and the management of footing shifts - with particular attention being given to the differing degrees of such shifts and what they are responsive to. Additionally, disagreements which involve interviewers clearly require more extensive consideration.

The present analysis of news interviews could also be developed through comparative analysis with other forms of broadcast talk - such as guest interviewer interviews, chat shows and phone-ins - which involve the transmission of first-person statements. Developing on the observations in section 7.2 of this chapter, this could involve a comparison of the organisation of turn-taking in these different contexts, and relatedly of the ways in which position-taking is managed/avoided by the interviewers, hosts and chairmen. It could also involve a consideration of the extent to which the talk in these contexts is designed to cast the broadcast audience in the role of either eavesdroppers or primary recipients. The value of such a research orientation is that it would provide for a better understanding of the extent to which the different constraints on these various forms of interaction influence the generation of on-air news and opinion. In this connection, it would also be valuable to locate and account for any differences between the news interviews that are transmitted in different countries.

A further possibility for future research is the comparative study of the treatment of news interviewees. A prevailing sociological, and indeed lay, interest in the news interview concerns the extent to which interviewees get different treatment. This interest, operating at the



level of the text, is well expressed by Hall, who it will be recalled observed that:

Unofficial strikers are always confronted with the national interest, squatters with the rights of private property, civil rights militants in Ulster with the need for Protestant and Catholic to work together, (and) Stop the Seventy Tourers with the way minority actions limit the right of the majority to enjoy themselves as they wish (Hall, 1973: 89).

The potential for fine-grained analysis of news interview events now in prospect makes possible an empirical and quantitative treatment of assertions like Halls, for which only anecdotal evidence was available previously. Accordingly, it should be possible to establish whether spokesmen for oppositional or radical views, or for any other social category, are questioned in distinctive ways.

Finally, work which goes beyond the analysis of the text would also be of value. This could involve, for example, direct observation of the training of interviewers, the processes through which interviewees are selected, the construction of questions, the conducting of interviews, as well as of any subsequent editing. Such research - carried out in conjunction with a search of archival materials and the interviewing of the news staff - would make possible a detailed and sophisticated account of the relationship between the organisational features of news interviews (as identified in studies such as this) and the background institutional, legal and other normative constraints on broadcast journalism. It would also, if appropriately designed, facilitate the construction of a more detailed history of the British news interview than has been possible in the present thesis.

Footnotes to Chapter Seven

1. It may be noted that there is not a single instance of a news interviewer overtly agreeing/disagreeing with an interviewee in the present dissertations data base.
2. This is, of course, reflected in the fact that in the context of celebrity and chat show interviews, the interviewer and interviewee is usually, characterised respectively as a 'host' and a 'guest'.
3. It should be mentioned here that because guest interviewing is normally conducted on a more formal footing, the production of continuers is not as a rule a constituent feature of guest interviewer conduct.
4. c.f. We Ask the Questions, Omnibus, 21/4/81, BBC 1.
5. *ibid.*

## APPENDIX

### TRANSCRIPT SYMBOLS

The transcript symbology used in this dissertation has been developed by Gail Jefferson. The following glossary of the symbols, which are used throughout conversation analytic research, is a shortened and slightly emended version of the one provided by Atkinson and Heritage (1984).

#### 1. Simultaneous utterances

Utterances starting simultaneously are linked together with single left-hand brackets:

Tom: [ I used to smoke a lot when I was young  
Bob: [ I used to smoke Camels

#### 2. Overlapping utterances

when overlapping utterances do not start simultaneously, the point at which an ongoing utterance is joined by another is marked with a single left-hand bracket, linking an ongoing with an overlapping utterance at the point where overlap begins:

Tom: I used to smoke [ a lot  
Bob: [ He thinks he's real tough

The point where overlapping utterances stop overlapping is marked with a single right-hand bracket:

Tom: I used to smoke [ a lot ] more than this  
Bob: [ I see ]

### 3. Contiguous utterances

When there is no interval between adjacent utterances, the second being latched immediately to the first (without overlapping it), the utterances are linked together with equal signs:

Tom: I used to smoke a lot=  
Bob: =He thinks he's real tough

The equal signs are also used to link different parts of a single speaker's utterance when those parts constitute a continuous flow of speech that has been carried over to another line, by transcript design, to accommodate an intervening interruption:

Tom: I used to smoke [ a lot more than this=  
Bob: [ You used to smoke  
Tom: =but I never inhaled the smoke

Sometimes more than one speaker latches directly onto a just-completed utterance, and a case of this sort is marked with a combination of equal signs and single left-hand brackets:

Tom: I used to smoke a lot=  
Bob: =[ He thinks he's tough  
Ann: =[ So did I

When overlapping utterances end simultaneously and are latched onto by a subsequent utterance, the link is marked by a single right-handed bracket and equal signs:

Tom: I used to smoke [ a lot ]=  
Bob: [ I see ]=  
Ann: =So did I

#### 4. Intervals within and between utterances

When intervals in the stream of talk occur, they are timed in tenths of a second and inserted within parentheses, either within an utterance:

Lil: When I was (0.6) oh nine or ten

or between utterances:

Hal: Step right up  
(1.3)

Hal: I said step right up  
(0.8)

Joe: Are you talking to me

Intervals of less than two-tenths of a second are indicated by a period enclosed within parentheses:

B: We got a (.) We got a little bit of it out here

J: I've left him for one  
(.)

V: Oh dear me

#### 5. Characteristics of speech delivery

In these transcripts, punctuation is used to mark not conventional grammatical units but, rather, attempts to capture characteristics of speech delivery. For example, a colon indicates an extension of the sound or syllable it follows:

Ron: What ha:ppened to you

and more colons prolong the stretch:

Mae: I ju::ss can't come

Tim: I'm so:: sorry re:::ally I am

The other punctuation marks are used as follows:

- . A period indicates a stopping fall in tone, not necessarily the end of a sentence.
- , A comma indicates a continuing intonation, not necessarily between clauses of sentences.
- ? A question mark indicates a rising inflection, not necessarily a question.
- A single dash indicates a halting, abrupt cutoff.

Emphasis is indicated by underlining:

Ann: It happens to be mine

Capital letters are used to indicate an utterance, or part thereof, that is spoken much louder than the surrounding talk:

Announcer: an the winner: i:s (l.4)  
RACHEL ROBERTS for YANKS

Audible aspirations (hhh) and inhalations (.hhh/'hhh) are inserted in the speech where they occur:

Pam: An thi(hh)s is for you hhh  
Don: .hhhh o(hh) tha(h)nk you rea(hh)lly

## 6. Transcriptionist doubt

In addition to the timings of intervals and inserted aspirations and inhalations, items enclosed within single parentheses are in doubt, as in:

Ted: I ('spose I'm not)  
(Ben): We all (t- )

Here "'spose I'm not", the identity of the second speaker, and "t-" represent different varieties of transcriptionist doubt.

When single parentheses are empty, no hearing could be achieved for the string of talk or item in question:

Todd: My ( ) catching  
( ): In the highest ( )

Here the middle of Todd's utterance, the speaker of the subsequent utterance, and the end of the subsequent utterance could not be recovered.

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